

# SASANIAN SOCIETY



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Great Sassanid Empire, Sassanid Empire, Sassanid Empire  
Hellenistic Empire



Center for Middle Eastern Studies  
*Harvard University*  
Ehsan Yarshater Distinguished Lectures in Iranian Studies  
No. 1

## **Sasanian Society**

**I. Warriors II. Scribes III. *Dehqāns***

by

**Ahmad Tafazzoli**

The late Professor of Old and Middle Iranian Languages  
University of Tehran

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## Foreword

The late Professor Ahmad Tafazzoli was invited to deliver the first lecture series of the Ehsan Yarshater Distinguished Lectures in Iranian Studies in 1996 (April 1-5) at Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. The lectures treated of the social classes of Sasanian Persia (3rd-7th centuries C.E.). The Zoroastrian priestly class was however not included as such in the lecturer's treatment. Unfortunately Professor Tafazzoli did not live long enough to elaborate his lectures for publication. Even so, the text which was received by Mrs. Tafazzoli posthumously presents the most detailed and authoritative treatment of Sasanian social classes to date.

As there were some lacunae in the footnotes and the bibliography, the text of the lectures was sent to Professor D.N MacKenzie who kindly agreed to check the footnotes and the bibliography. He also partially edited the manuscript. As he did not have access in his present place of residence to some of the works mentioned in the footnotes the assistance of Professor A. Shapur Shahbazi was sought to identify the details of some of the works in the bibliography.

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University would like to express its gratitude to both scholars for their selfless and generous assistance.

Roy P. Mottahedeh,  
Gurney Professor of Islamic  
History  
Harvard University

### About the author

Professor Ahmad Tafazzoli was born in Isfahan on December 16, 1937. He studied at the University of Tehran where he received a B.A. in Persian Language and Literature in 1959. He then went to London in 1961 to pursue his studies with the renowned Iranist W.B. Henning and he received an M.A. in Old and Middle Iranian Languages from the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London in 1965. From London he went to Paris, where he continued his research with the late Professor J. de Menasce. In 1966, he obtained his Ph.D. in the Pre-Islamic Iranian Languages from the University of Tehran with a dissertation entitled "A Critical Edition of the Ninth Book of *Dēnkard*."

Upon his return from London he was employed by Bonyād-e Farhang-e Iran (Iranian Cultural Foundation) which was headed by Professor Parviz Natel Khanlari and had planned a series of glossaries of the Middle Persian texts as a preliminary step toward compilation of a documented lexicon of Persian.

In 1968 he was appointed Assistant Professor and in 1973 as Associate Professor of Middle Persian and Avestan in the Department of Old Iranian Languages in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Tehran. In 1978 he was promoted to the rank of full professor.

While he continued his cooperation with the Bonyād-e Farhang-e Iran, he was also appointed by the Iranian Ministry of Art and Culture a member of editorial committee for a critical edition of the *Shāhnāme* under the chief editorship of the late Mojtaba Minovi.

After the revolution of 1979, when the new Academy of Persian Language and Literature was instituted, he was elected a member and later he assumed the vice-presidency of the Academy for scientific research; he continued to hold that position until his death on January 13, 1997. In 1996 he was made Consulting Editor for Middle Iranian Languages to the *Encyclopædia Iranica*, to which he frequently contributed.

Professor Tafazzoli was a prolific scholar and made remarkable contributions to the advancement of our knowledge of Middle Iranian languages, particularly Middle Persian. He published a considerable number of articles in Persian, French and English. He was the editor, with Philippe Gignoux, of *Memorial Jean de Menasce* (1974). Among his books one may mention *Vāž-e-nāme-ye Minu-ye Xrad* (Glossary of the *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 1969) and a Persian translation of its text, *Tarjome-ye Minu-ye Xrad* (1975); *Osture-ye Zandegi-ye Zardusht* (the Legend of Zoroaster, 1992, with Jaleh Amuzgar); *Anthologie of Zādspram* (1993, with Philippe Gignoux), *Zabān-e Pahlavi va dastur-e ān* (A grammar of Middle Persian, 1995, with Jaleh Amuzgar); and of *Tārīkh-e Adabiyyāt-e Iran piš az Islam* (History of Iranian Literature Prior to Islam, 1998), which contains a detailed and most useful treatment of the Middle Persian works and documents.

He was awarded the Prix Ghirshman in 1994 by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres of Paris for his work in the field of Iranian Studies and especially for *Anthologie de Zādspram*. In Iran in 1995 the same book was named the best book of the year in the international category. In 1996, he was awarded a honorary doctorate by the University of Saint-Petersburg in recognition of his scholarship.

He was a member of Société Asiatique (France) since 1971; of Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Council (England) since

1972; of The International Committee of *Acta Iranica* (Belgium) 1981; a founding member of Anjoman-e Athar-e Melli (Society for Preservation of National Monuments (1980-1981); and a member of the Scientific Consultative Body of *The Great Islamic Encyclopaedia* (1987).

He was a mainstay of the *Nāme-ye Farhangestān*, the organ of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, where his latest articles were published.

Professor Ahmad Tafazzoli was a dedicated scholar who devoted his entire career to research and instruction. His modesty and lack of pretensions was in sharp contrast with his extensive knowledge.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

## I. Warriors

The Pahlavi term for 'warrior' was *artēštār*, derived from Avestan *raθaēštar-*, originally meaning 'one who stands in a chariot'. It was used to designate the estate of warriors in the pre-Islamic literature, and survived in the *Šāhnāma*, where it is corrupted to *nys'ly'n* in the manuscripts, the correct form of which should probably be *tēštāriyān*, as I have suggested elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The colour of their clothes is said to have been 'red' or 'purple', in both the native and the foreign sources. Thus in a passage of the *Dēnkard* it is stated:

*ud andar paymōgān pad ān ī suxr ud may-gōn paymōzan kē  
pad harwisp pēsišn pēsīd ēstēd pad sēm ud zarr ud karkēhan  
ān-iz ī be widābāg yākand*

'And among the clothes, the garment which is red and wine-coloured, adorned with all kinds of ornament, with silver and gold, chalcedony, and shining ruby (belongs to warriors)'.<sup>2</sup>

Again in the *Great Bundahišn*.<sup>3</sup>

*ud wāy ī weh jāmag ī zarrēn ud sēmēn ī gōhr-pēsīd ī argawān  
ī was-rang paymōxt ēstād, brahmag ī artēštārīh*

'Vāy, the Good, donned a garment of gold and silver, adorned with precious stones, purple and multicoloured, (namely) the costume of warriorhood'.

Curtius Rufus (1st cent. A.D.), describing the movement of the Persian army of Darius III towards the battlefield, wrote that the sacred fire and accompanying Magi, leading the march, were 'followed by 365 young men clad in purple robes,' (one for each day of the year).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tafazzoli, 1993, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Dēnkard*, p. 206.3. Cf. Zaehner, 1955, pp. 122, 375, 378; de Menasce, 1973, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Great Bundahišn*, p. 31. Cf. Zaehner, 1955, pp. 322, 333.

<sup>4</sup> P. 82, 3.3.10 'Magos trecenti et sexaginta quinque iuvenes sequebantur

Warriors played an important part in the Sasanian society and enjoyed some privileges. A passage of the *Škand-gumānīg-wizār*, describing the position of each of the four Sasanian classes, reads as follows:

*andar gēhān ī kōdag ī ast mardōm paydāgēnīd pad homānāgīh ī ēn čahār pēšagān ī gēhān čiyōn abar sar āsrōnīh abar dast artēštārīh abar aškam wāstaryōšīh abar pāy hutuxšīh*

‘As to the microcosm, i.e. man, Ohrmazd made it manifest in the same manner as he did the four estates of the world, in such a way that to the head corresponds the estate of priests, to the hands corresponds the estate of warriors, to the belly the estate of cultivators and to the feet the estate of artisans’.<sup>5</sup>

The idea that the state of warriors in the society is tantamount to the hands in the body also occurs in a passage of the *Dēnkard*:  
*tan ī mardōm čahār pēšag ī gēhān pad baxšišn, abar sar āsrōnīh ud abar dast artēštārīh ud abar aškamb wāstaryōšīh ud abar pāy hutuxšīh*

‘The division of the body of man (corresponds to that of) the four estates of the world: to the head (corresponds) the estate of priests, to the hands the estate of warriors, to the belly the estate of cultivators and to the feet the estate of artisans’.<sup>6</sup>

The same notion is found in the *Letter of Tansar*:

‘Know that according to our religion men are divided into four estates ... and their head is king. The first estate is that of the clergy; ... The second estate is that of the military (مقاتل), that is to say of the fighting-men, of whom there are two groups, cavalry and foot-soldiers. Within them there are differences of rank and function. The third estate is that of the scribes ... . The fourth estate is known as that of the artisans ...’.<sup>7</sup>

The people belonging to an inferior estate were obliged to hold the warriors in respect:

*puniceis amiculis velati,...*

<sup>5</sup>. *ŠGW*, I, 20 (de Menasce 1945, p. 24)

<sup>6</sup>. *Dēnkard*, p. 429.5-10. Cf. Zaehner, 1955, pp. 139-145.

<sup>7</sup>. Ed. Minovi, § 4; trl. Boyce, 1968, pp. 37-38.

‘As for the soldiers or fighting-men, he [the king of kings] has conferred positions of honour and favours of all kinds upon that group, because they are ever sacrificing their own lives and possessions and followers for the welfare of those who labour, devoting themselves to combat with the country’s foes, while the common people sit at ease among their wives and children, enjoying repose and tranquility, safe and secure in their houses and in pursuit of their own livelihoods. It is fitting that the working people should salute them and bow before them, and that the fighting men in turn should show reverence to the nobles...’.<sup>8</sup>

The duty of the warriors is described in the Pahlavi text *Mēnōg ī Xrad*:<sup>9</sup>

*artēštārān xwēškārīh dušmen zadan ud šahr ud būm ī xwēš abē-bīm ud āsān dāštan*

‘The duty of the warriors is to strike the enemy and to hold their own country and land secure and tranquil’.

In the same text the vices of the warriors are mentioned thus:<sup>10</sup>  
*āhōg ī artēštārān stahmagīh ud zadārīh ud mihrōdruzīh ud \*anabaxšāwandīh ud \*jeh-gāyīh ud abartanīh ud tar-menišnīh*

‘The vices of the warriors are: oppression, violence, breaking faith, lack of remorse, whoring, arrogance and contempt’.

For the warriors, valour (*hunar*) was considered the most noble ornament. The word *hunar* is used here in the same sense as in the *Šāhnāma*, namely ‘skill in the affairs of war, bravery, manliness’. It is explained as *narīh ī az xwadīh* ‘manliness (resulting) from one’s essence’.<sup>11</sup>

The most significant duty of the warriors was said to be the protection of the country against any aggression. In a passage of the *Pahlavi Rivāyat* it is stated that:

*az abestāg paydāg kū ka an-ēr dušman āyēnd pad šahr <ī>*

<sup>8</sup>. Ed. Minovi, § 11; trl. Boyce, 1968, pp. 48-9.

<sup>9</sup>. *Mēnōg ī Xrad*, Q. 30.9-10.

<sup>10</sup>. *Mēnōg ī Xrad*, Q. 58.8.

<sup>11</sup>. *ŠGW* I, 27 (de Menasce, p. 26).



*ērān <ud> wardag ud zyān ī was kāmēnd kardan, [ud] artēštār awēšān abāz dāštan rāy bē ō awēšān šawēd; was bawēd ka artēštār was ōzanēnd, ud pas-iz \*meh-snāhīh rāy an-ēr be āyēnd ud ātaxš ī wahrām ud mard <ī> ahlaw be ōzanēnd <ud> pad ērānšahr wardag <ud> zyān kunēnd; artēštār kē ān kārezār be nē kunēd <ud> wirēzēd margarzān; ān kē kunēd, u-š andār kārezār be ōzanēnd, ahlaw bawēd*

‘It is revealed in the Avesta: if non-Iranian enemies come to the land of Iran and want to take hostages and do much damage, in order to restrain them the warriors go towards them. It often happens that they kill (our) warriors, and even then, because of (their) greater \*violence, the non-Iranians come and destroy the Wahram Fire and (kill) the righteous men (i.e. the priests), and they take captives and do damage in the country of Iran. The warrior who does not do battle and (who) flees is *margazān* (i.e. commits a sin worthy of death); he who does (battle) and whom they kill in battle is blessed’.<sup>12</sup>

### Army

The usual word for ‘army’ in Pahlavi is *spāh*, which is well attested in the Zoroastrian texts. In Manichaean Middle Persian the word occurs as *‘sp’h / ispāh*<sup>13</sup> and in Parthian *‘sp’d / ispāδ*, derived from Avestan *spāda-*, *spāda-*. Old Persian *-spāda-* (attested as an element of a compound proper noun). It should, however, be noted that the usual term denoting ‘army’ in Old Persian is *kāra-*.

Another usual term in Middle Persian and Parthian is *gund*, which by origin seems to mean ‘regiment, legion’, for example:

Mid. Pers. *was a-mar gund ī zēnāwand <ī> ārāstag-drafs*

<sup>12</sup> *Pahlavi Rivāyat*, ch. 17 d.10 (pp. 53.13–54.7); Williams, 1990, text, I, p. 92 f.; trl., II, p. 34, with some modifications. [*\*meh-snāhīh* ‘greater violence’: the text has *msd’is’nyh* = *meh-dādestānīh* ‘greater justice’ or the like, here inappropriate. It is perhaps rewritten from *\*msDYNayh*, and this a misreading of *\*mssn’hyh* DNM].

<sup>13</sup> Sundermann, *KPT*, p. 45, l. 837.

*hēnd* ‘Many and innumerable troops that are armed and have adorned banners’.<sup>14</sup>

Parth. *‘wn gwrd rzmywz ky ‘sp’d hyšt gryft prm’w gwnd* ‘O warlike hero who has abandoned (his) army, fear has seized the troops’.<sup>15</sup>

This term is often used in the Pahlavi texts in juxtaposition with *spāh*, as *gund ud spāh / spāh ud gund*.<sup>16</sup>

The same term is frequently used in the Pahlavi papyri, and is borrowed into Arabic as *ḡund*, pl. *ḡunūd*.

A special regiment of the Persian army seems to have been called *gund ī šāhān-šāh* ‘the regiment of the king of kings’:

‘On the day when the battle of Qādisīya took place there were 4,000 (soldiers) with Rustam (son of Farrozzād) called *‘ḡund šāhānšah*’.<sup>17</sup>

In the Pahlavi texts, however, the word *gund* is often used in the sense ‘army’, e.g.

*ka gund nēst xwadāy \*a-bandag ud dēn <a->burdār ud zēn anabāyīšnīg ud āmurzišn a-nām ud ganj a-sūd*

‘If there is no army, the sovereign remains without servants, the religion without adherents, the arms become useless, mercy obsolete, and the treasury unprofitable’.<sup>18</sup>

Another word is *kārawān*, meaning ‘troops on the march, military column’, the first element of which, *kār*, derives from the Old Persian *kāra-* ‘army’: *kārawān* (*ī ērānšahr*) ‘the army (of Iranšahr)’.<sup>19</sup> It is also used in Manichaean Parthian:

*‘wd whwryd k’rw’n* ‘and the troops are confused’.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> ZWY ch. 7.8, pp. 115, 142.

<sup>15</sup> Boyce, *Reader*, text ch 1, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. *Kārnāmag* chh. 5.2, 6.1, 8.1; ZWY ch. 7.10; ŠGW chh. 12.62, 14.29; *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg* ch. 16.41, 45, 47, 49.

<sup>17</sup> Balāḡurī, p. 343, sec. 708.

<sup>18</sup> *Dēnkard*, p. 137.11, trl. de Menasce, 1973, p. 139, ch. 134.

<sup>19</sup> *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, 27, 29 (*Pahl. Texts*, pp. 3.21, 4.2).

<sup>20</sup> Boyce, *Reader*, p. 139, text ch 1.

'wī dw k'rw'n ky pd mn rfynd 'n's'g 'and the two armies that attack me are innumerable'.<sup>21</sup>

It is also used in the Pahlavi and Parthian inscriptions, written *k'lw'n* and *k'rw'n* respectively:

*W hngwn MNW PWN ZK k'lw'n HWH* 'And also those who were in that army'.<sup>22</sup>

The word *kārawān* gradually lost its military meaning and was already used in Pahlavi in the sense of 'group of people who travel together, caravan', e.g. in *kārnāmag*, ch. 4.19.

*APš k'lw'n-I glwh-I OL ptylk YATWNt* 'and a caravan, a group (of people), came to meet them'.

The Parthian word *zāwar*, corresponding to Persian *zōr* 'strength', is also used in the sense of 'military force, army':

*z'wry hngwšn 'BDt* 'He gathered an army'.<sup>23</sup>

*prwmyn z'wry HWBDWt* 'the army of the Romans was destroyed'.<sup>24</sup>

*z'wry 70 ALPYN ... LHw z'wry s'rr* 'an army of 70,000 ... the chiefs of that army'.<sup>25</sup>

*'yr'n š[try] z'wr hnbndywd* 'we have composed/mobilized (?) an army of Eranšahr'.<sup>26</sup>

The word also seems to occur, though corrupted, in the Pahlavi books:

*Ardawān az kustag kustag čiyōn az Ray \*Damāwand Dailamān ud Padišxwārgar spāh ud \*z'wl / \*zōr xwāst*

'Ardawān summoned army and forces from different regions such as Ray, Damāwand, Dailamān and Padišxwārgar'.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup>. Boyce, *Reader*, p. 172, text *dc* 12.

<sup>22</sup>. Paikuli, I. 14. See Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 40f., § 31.

<sup>23</sup>. ŠKZ, Parth. I. 3.

<sup>24</sup>. ŠKZ, Parth. I. 4.

<sup>25</sup>. ŠKZ, Parth. I. 11; in the corresponding Pers. I. 14 only [z](')(w)(l)y is still legible.

<sup>26</sup>. Paikuli, Pers./Parth. 18/16. See Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 43 & 3.2, p. 69.

<sup>27</sup>. *Kārnāmag*, ch. 7, 5, *sp'h W \*hwī* (hardly *āxwarr* 'stable').

*pas az ān was spāh gund <ud> \*z'wl / \*zōr ō ham kard* 'subsequently he gathered many armies and forces'.<sup>28</sup>

Another current word was *laškar*, which is attested several times in the *Dēnkard*, book 8.<sup>29</sup> Cf. Armenian *laškar*, borrowed after the middle of the 5th century A.D.<sup>30</sup>

The word *hēn* 'hostile army' is attested in Pahlavi as a learned word translating Avestan *haēnā*.<sup>31</sup> It also occurs in Manichaean Middle Persian in the compound *šknhyn / iškann-hēn* 'destroying the hostile army'.<sup>32</sup> The word is borrowed into Armenian meaning 'enemy army, thief, pirate'.<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pahl. *hēnīh* 'piracy' in the *Kārnāmag*.<sup>34</sup>

The expression *asp ud mard* (SWSY' W GBR') 'horses and men', attested in the Pahl. inscriptions,<sup>35</sup> seems to signify 'army'. The same expression is also attested in the *Dēnkard*: *asp ud mard ud zēn abzār* 'horses and men (i.e. army) and its arms and equipment'.<sup>36</sup>

## Military Posts

In the oldest documents of the Sasanian epoch, namely the inscriptions of the 3rd century A.D., the highest military dignity was 'chief of the army, general' (*spāhbed* in Mid. Pers., *spādbad* in Parth.). In the inscription of Shapur at the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt a certain Raxš was mentioned as *spāhbed*,<sup>37</sup> and the same person

<sup>28</sup>. *Kārnāmag*, ch. 8, 1, *sp'h gnd z'wl* (not the placenem Zābul).

<sup>29</sup>. *Dēnkard*, pp. 729.19, 730.11, 731.6, 735.21, 738.10, 11, 761.23.

<sup>30</sup>. Hübschmann, p. 157, no. 264.

<sup>31</sup>. Y. 9.18, 57.25; ZXA p. 117.2; ZWY ch. 6.6; *DkM* pp. 601.21, 659.1.

<sup>32</sup>. Henning, *Sogdica*, Frag. f, verso 17, pp. 31, 33.

<sup>33</sup>. Hübschmann, p. 180, no. 345.

<sup>34</sup>. Henning, *Pers. Titel*, p. 141.

<sup>35</sup>. KKZ 11, 12; cf. KNRm 40; Paikuli § 23, 11/10, § 44, 22/20; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, pp. 37, 48.

<sup>36</sup>. *Dēnkard*, p. 367. 10.

<sup>37</sup>. ŠKZ Pers. 29, *lhšy ZY sp'hpt*, Parth. 24, *rhšy sp'dpty*.

was also mentioned in the inscription of Narseh at Paikuli.<sup>38</sup> In the Pahl. texts the title *Erān spāhbed* is attested.<sup>39</sup> It is probable that this title belongs to a later Sasanian period, like other titles such as *Erān dibīrbed* 'Chief Secretary of Iran' and *Eran drustbed* 'Chief Physician of Iran'. According to Ṭabarī<sup>40</sup> Xusraw I, Anūšīrawān, eliminated the post of *Erān spāhbed* and divided his duties between four *spāhbeds* according to the four cardinal points. Thus in the Pahlavi texts one often finds *xwarāsān spāhbed* 'general of the east', *xwarwarān spāhbed* 'general of the west', *nēmroz spāhbed* 'general of the south' and *abāxtar spāhbed* 'general of the north'. Nevertheless, the post of *spāhbedān spāhbed* 'the general of generals, commander-in-chief' is also mentioned in the *Bundahišn*.<sup>41</sup>

*pad awēšān axtarān čahār spāhbed pad čahār kust gumārd*  
*<ud> spāhbed-ē abar awēšān spāhbedān gumārd ... Tištar*  
*xwarāsān spāhbed, Sadwēs nēmōz spāhbed, Wanand xwarwarān*  
*spāhbed, Haftōrang abāxtar spāhbed, mēx <i> gāh, kē mēx i*  
*mayān i āsmān gōwēnd, spāhbedān spāhbed*

'Over these stars he (i.e. Ohrmazd) appointed four generals in the four directions, and he appointed a general over these generals. ... Tištar (Sirius) is the general of the east, Sadwēs (Fomalhaut?) the general of the south, Wanand (Vega) the general of the west, Haftōring (the Great Bear) the general of the north, the Pole star, which is called the Peg in the middle of the sky, is the commander-in-chief'.

Instead of the word *abāxtar* 'north' the geographical name Adurbāyagān was also used for the region and the general,<sup>42</sup> to avoid naming 'north', the region in which, according to the

<sup>38</sup> Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 107 lhšy.

<sup>39</sup> *Kārnāmag*, ch. 15, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 849; Nöldeke, p. 155 f.

<sup>41</sup> *Great Bundahišn*, p. 26. 11-13; translation based on that of W.B. Henning, *Astr. Chapter*, p. 231. [Also p. 50.5, again in a figurative, astronomical context. DNM].

<sup>42</sup> *Pahl. Texts* p. 24.6, *pad kust<i> Adurbādagān...*; Ya'qūbī, I, p. 202; 'the Spāhbaδ has the title Spāhbaδ al-Aδurbājān'.

Zoroastrian belief, the gate of hell is situated. Three of the four *spāhbeds*, of the east, south and west, are mentioned in the Pahlavi treatise entitled *Sūr saxwan*.<sup>43</sup> The title *nymlwc(y) sp'hpt(y)* is found on a Sasanian bulla, published by Gignoux, which confirms Ṭabarī's account.<sup>44</sup>

Another military title attested in the Pahlavi texts is *artēštārān sālār* 'chief of the warriors'. According to Ṭabarī, one of the sons of Mihr-Narse, the grand vizier (*wuzurg framādār*), who lived in the 5th century A.D., \*Kārdū by name, bore this title. In the text of Ṭabarī it is attested in the form, اسطران سلا which is a corruption of رتیشتران / ارتیشتران سلا<sup>45</sup> *raθēštārān* or *artēštārān sālār*. According to Procopius, in the 6th century A. D., in the time of Kawād (488-531 A.D.), a certain Siyāwaš bore this title: *adrastadaran salānēs / artēštārān sālār*.<sup>46</sup> The same title is also attested in the *Kārnāmag*<sup>47</sup> and the treatise *Wizārišn ī čatrang*.<sup>48</sup>

According to Ṭabarī the post of *Artēštārān sālār* was superior to that of *spāhbed* (فوق مرتبة الاصفهيد) and was near the rank of *Argbed* 'citadel chief' (تقارب مرتبة الارجد).<sup>49</sup> *Artēštārān sālār* was probably synonymous with *spāhbedān spāhbed* or *Erān spāhbed*. The same title is also found in a form emendable to رتیشتران سلا<sup>50</sup> *Artēštārān-sālār* in an Arabic text entitled *Kitāb al-Tāǧ* 'Book of the Crown',<sup>50</sup> describing the customs of the court of Xusraw I, Anūšīrawān, at the Nowruz feast. It is translated into Arabic

<sup>43</sup> *Pahl. Texts*, p. 157.7.

<sup>44</sup> Gignoux, 1991, pp. 68 f.

<sup>45</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 869.

<sup>46</sup> *Persian Wars*, 1.6, 11; Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, p. 110, n.; Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 131.

<sup>47</sup> *Kārnāmag*, ch. 18, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Pahl. Texts* p. 116.17.

<sup>49</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 869.

<sup>50</sup> Grignaschi, 1966, p. 105.

as (صاحب خيل الاقاليم) 'the chief of the country's horsemen'. At the king's audience during this feast the *Artēštārān-sallār* was the fourth dignitary to deliver a speech, after 'the Chief Secretary of Taxes' (ديريذ : كاتب الخراج), 'the Chief Priest' (الموبدان موبذ) and 'the Grand Vizier' (رأس الوزرا), apparently the equivalent of Pahlavi *wuzurg framādār*. In the *Letter of Tansar*<sup>51</sup> the *spahbad-e spahbadān* (اصفهد اصفهبدان) is mentioned alongside 'the chief mowbed' (رئيس موبدان) and 'the chief scribe' (مهرتريان). There is every indication that, in spite of Ṭabarī's assertion, the post of the commander-in-chief (*spāhbedān spāhbed* or *artēštārān sālār*) was not totally abandoned after the military reforms of Anūšīrawān, but rather that its holder was deprived of some of his powers.<sup>52</sup>

\* \* \*

The chief of the troops was called *gundsālār*, well attested in the Pahlavi paypri of the time of Xusraw II (591-628 A.D.) in the spelling *gwndsrdl*. It is borrowed in Armenian as *gundsatar*. The title survived for some time after the fall of the Sasanian empire. Ṭabarī<sup>53</sup> relates that in the year 36 A.H./656-7 A.D. one Māhūya, governor (*marzbān*) of Marw, came to visit Imām 'Alī, the Muslim caliph, in order to re-confirm the treaty he had already concluded with Ibn 'Amir, the Arab general. The caliph wrote a letter about this matter to the *dehqāns* (*dahāqina*), to the knights (*asāwira*) and to the chiefs of the troops (*gundsallārīn*).

\* \* \*

Another military title was *dizbed* 'fortress commander', attested in the inscription of Shapur I at the so-called Ka'ba-ye

<sup>51</sup> Ed. Minovi, p. 27.

<sup>52</sup> Grignaschi, 1966, p. 134, n. 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ṭabarī, I, 6, p. 3249.

Zardošt (Mid. Pers. 1. 32: *dzpty*; Parth. 1. 26: *dzypty*),<sup>54</sup> where a certain Tīr-Mihr of the courtiers of Shapur is mentioned as *dizbed* of Šahrgird (Mid. Pers. *štrkrty*, Parth. *ḥštrkrt*), a locality near Karkūk.<sup>55</sup>

A military post similar to that of the *dizbed* was *argbed*, well attested in documents foreign to Iran. According to Ṭabarī,<sup>56</sup> among the officials of Gōzihr (Ar. جوزهر), king of Istakhr at the end of the Arsacid period, there was a certain eunuch called Tīrī who was *argbed* (Ar. أرجبد) of Dārābgird. When Ardašīr, the future Sasanian king, was seven years old his father entrusted him to Gōzihr with the request to educate his son. After the death of Tīrī, Ardašīr assumed his office. On another occasion Ṭabarī,<sup>57</sup> while describing the post of *artēštārān sallār* 'Commander-in chief of the army', wrote that 'this office was close to the rank of *argbed*'. Another personality of the Sasanian epoch who bore this title was Mihr-Šāpūr, a high dignitary of the court of Yazdgird I (399-421 A.D.).<sup>58</sup> At the end of Sasanian times the bearer of this title was particularly responsible for taking care of the affairs of the royal households.<sup>59</sup> [There is no good reason to prevent us identifying the Greek from *arkapátēs*, recorded in a parchment from Dura Europos dated 121 A.D., with *argbed*, in spite of Szemerényi's objection, who denies the existence of such a title in Sasanian times.] As I have demonstrated elsewhere, one should not confuse this title with *arzbed* / *hazbed* 'chief of the royal harem' (Ar. هرجد, Pers. هرزبد).<sup>60</sup>

It seems to me that the post of *argbed* was superior to that of

<sup>54</sup> Gignoux, 1972, pp. 22, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Maricq, p. 70 [328].

<sup>56</sup> Ṭabarī, I, pp. 814-5.

<sup>57</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 869.

<sup>58</sup> Labourt, 1904, p. 97; Christensen, *L'Iran*, pp. 107, 271.

<sup>59</sup> Laufer, 1919, p. 532.

<sup>60</sup> Tafazzolī, 1990.

dizbed.

\* \* \*

The 'Life Guards' were called *puštībānān* and their commander *puštībānān sālār*,<sup>61</sup> who was mentioned as one of the intimates of the king.<sup>62</sup> Cf. Armenian *p'uštīpanač* (gen. pl.), or *p'uštīpan*, *sałar*.<sup>63</sup>

\* \* \*

Yet another military title, of Parthian origin, is *hāmharz* 'adjutant, attendant', attested in Man. Parthian (*h'mhyrz*) and in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*,<sup>64</sup> and borrowed into Armenian as *ham(a)harz*.<sup>65</sup>

### Divisions of the Army

The army was divided, as elsewhere, into two main arms: the cavalry and the infantry. We read in the *Dēnkard*:<sup>66</sup>

*ud andar artēštārīh \*aswārīh<sup>67</sup> ud paygīh ud abārīg artēštārīg ... kār*

'In the estate of warriors (there are two groups): the cavalry and the infantry, and other military functions'.

The same statement occurs in the *Letter of Tansar*.<sup>68</sup>

'The second estate is that of the military, that is to say of the

<sup>61</sup> *Kārnāmag*, ch. 15, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Christensen, *L'Iran*, pp. 132, 395.

<sup>63</sup> Hübschmann, p. 235; Nyberg, 1974, p. 163.

<sup>64</sup> *Pahl. Texts* p. 1.6, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Hübschmann, p. 177. See Bolognesi, p. 50.

<sup>66</sup> *Dēnkard*, p. 59.19-20; de Menasce, 1973, p. 75, ch. 69.

<sup>67</sup> The text has 'swb'l'n'; cf. *aswārīh ud paygīh* at *Dēnkard*, p. 541.8.

<sup>68</sup> Minovi, § 4; Boyce, 1968, p. 38.

fighting-men, of whom there are two groups, cavalry and foot-soldiers. Within them there are differences of rank and function'.

The word for 'cavalry' in Pahlavi is *aswār* ('swb'l, *PRŠY*'),<sup>69</sup> and for 'infantry' *payg* or *payādag*. The commander of the cavalry was called *aswārān sālār* (in the *Wizārišn ī čatrang*, § 10).<sup>70</sup> In the Pahlavi papyri published by Hansen<sup>71</sup> there is a word which he deciphered as *PRŠY'nd'r'n*. I believe (without seeing the original) that it should rather be read as *\*PRŠY'nsrdl / aswārān sālār* 'commander of the cavalry'.

An important official, according to the *Letter of Tansar*, was the instructor of the cavalymen, مؤدب اساوره in Persian and الاساوره in Arabic, who had the duty 'to keep the fighting-men in town and countryside practised in the use of arms and all kindred arts...'.<sup>72</sup>

The word *payg* (*pdk*) 'foot-soldier' is well attested in Book Pahlavi,<sup>73</sup> on an ostracon from Dura (*pdky*),<sup>74</sup> in Man. Parth. (*pdg / paḍag*),<sup>75</sup> Armenian (*payik*), Syriac (*pyg' / paygā*), and Arabic (*fayf*).<sup>76</sup> The word *payādag* is also attested in Book Pahlavi<sup>77</sup> as well as in Man. Mid. Pers. (*py'dg*).<sup>78</sup> The infantry

<sup>69</sup> Man. Mid. Pers. 'sw'r (Sundermann, *KPT*, II. 1929-30), Pahl. Inscr. *PLŠY'* (Gignoux, 1972, p. 31; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 118 and 3.2, p. 78) and *PRŠY'* (Gignoux, 1972, p. 32), and in Parth. (Nisa documents) 'sb'r[y] (D'jakonov-Livšic, 1966, p. 148).

<sup>70</sup> *Pahl. Texts* p. 117.1.

<sup>71</sup> Hansen, 49a 2.

<sup>72</sup> Minovi, § 5 end; Boyce, 1968, p. 41.

<sup>73</sup> *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* § 19 (*Pahl. Texts* p. 3.3); *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg*, p. 16.16; *Dēnkard*, p. 695.12-17; cf. *paygīh* 'infantry', DkM pp. 59.10, 541.2.

<sup>74</sup> Henning, 1954, p. 479.

<sup>75</sup> Henning, *Sogdica*, Frag. c (22), p. 25 f.

<sup>76</sup> Hübschmann, p. 220; Bailey, *BSOS* 6, 1930, p. 78 [cf. new n. 81]; Henning, *loc.cit.*

<sup>77</sup> *Wizārišn ī čatrang*, § 31, *Pahl. Texts*, p. 117.1, 2.

formed the rearguard. It consisted of the mass of peasants taken for military service.<sup>79</sup> The commander of the infantry was called *paygān sālār*, preserved in Syriac (*pygnslr*).<sup>80</sup>

The cavalry naturally enjoyed more importance than the infantry. In a passage of the *Ayādgār ī Jāmāspīg*, a Zoroastrian apocalyptic text, where the upheaval of the Iranian society at the end of the world is predicted, it is stated that: *aswār payg ud payg aswār bawēd* 'a horseman will become a foot-soldier and a foot-soldier will become a horseman'.<sup>81</sup>

There is also mention of 'charioteers' in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* § 27,<sup>82</sup> called *wardyūndār*.

In the reign of Anūšīrawān (531-579 A.D.) there existed an 'office of the army', similar to a modern Ministry of War, or defence, called *dīwān al-ʿjund*<sup>83</sup> or *dīwān al-muqātala*.<sup>84</sup> This was under the supervision of a Secretary (*dibīr*),<sup>85</sup> whose duties were described as:

- 1) inspecting the troops every four months,
- 2) improving the equipment of each group,
- 3) supervising the military inspectors who had the duty of training the army in the arts of horsemanship and in archery, and looking into the accomplishment of their tasks and their failure.

According to Ṭabarī, Dīnawarī and Balʿamī a certain Pābag, son of \*Behruwān,<sup>86</sup> had this post in the reign of Anūšīrawān

<sup>78</sup> Henning, *Sogdica*, Frag. c (24), p. 25 f.

<sup>79</sup> Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 209.

<sup>80</sup> Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, p. 448; Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, p. 47; Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 132.

<sup>81</sup> Bailey, 1930, p. 58.

<sup>82</sup> *Pah. Texts*, p. 3.22.

<sup>83</sup> Dīnawarī, p. 74; cf. *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 62, v. 16, *dīwān-i 'arʿ u sipāh*.

<sup>84</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 963.14; Nöldeke, Ṭabarī, p. 247.

<sup>85</sup> *Kātib* in Ṭabarī and Dīnawarī.

<sup>86</sup> The name is recorded as *'lbyrw'n* in Ṭabarī (Nöldeke, p. 247), *byrd'n*, *nyrw'n*, etc. in Balʿamī, *'lhw'd'n* in Dīnawarī, 79. These seem to be corruptions

and enjoyed a considerable authority. For a military parade on the arena in front of the royal palace he constructed a platform covered with a precious carpet, on which cushions were placed.

He fixed the pay of each man from 100 up to 4,000 *dirhams* according to his skill and his force, not less than 100 *dirhams* for foot-soldiers and not exceeding 4,000 *dirhams* for horseman.

## Ranks

As we have already mentioned, the author of the *Letter of Tansar* related that among the warriors there were differences of rank and function.<sup>87</sup> In the *Kārnamag of Anūšīrawān*, only preserved in an Arabic translation, there is an allusion to the seven ranks (*sab' marātib*) in the army.<sup>88</sup> According to another Arabic text, entitled *al-Siyāsāt al-'ammīya*, the Umayyad army was also divided into seven ranks. It is further stated that 'another good rule is the one according to which nobody should be promoted to a superior rank before going through inferior ranks. In this respect the Persians have abundantly been praised'.<sup>89</sup>

It seems reasonable to suggest that the seven ranks of the Umayyad army were imitated from the Sasanian army, as was proposed by Grignaschi. Points like this, as well as the Middle Persian military loan-words in Arabic such as *'askar*, *ʿjund*, *fayṣ*, indicate that the Muslims adopted the military organizations of the Sasanians.

of *\*bhrw'n* \*Beh-ruwān (<Pahl. *\*weh-ruwān* 'having a good soul'). Bābak is also mentioned in the *Nawrūz-nāma*.

<sup>87</sup> Minovi, § 11; Boyce, 1968, p. 48-9.

<sup>88</sup> Miskawayh, I, p. 107; trl. Grignaschi, 1966, p. 24.

<sup>89</sup> Grignaschi, 1966, p. 42, n. 76.

## War

It will perhaps be useful to give an alphabetic list of words concerning war:

*ardīg* 'battle'. 'ltyk, Gr. Bd. 5.8, 61.9; ŠGW 12.62, 16.17, 18. Man.MP 'rdyg, Inscr. Pahl. 'ltyk,<sup>90</sup> < OIr. \*artika-, from the same root *var*, i.e. 'attack', as in OP *ham-ar-ana-* 'battle'.<sup>91</sup>

*ardikkar* 'warrior, combatant'. Man. MP 'rdykr, Henning, BBB; Boyce, *Reader*, cu 15.

*ardikkarīh* 'battle'. 'ltyk-glyh, -klyh, Gr.Bd. 4.14, 30.11, 33.12.

*ardik-kardārīh* 'doing battle'. 'ltyk-kl'tlyh, Gr. Bd. 71. 4.

*ardik-kunišnīh* 'doing battle'. 'ltyk-kwnšnyh, Gr. Bd. 60.7.

*ardīg-jumbišnīh* 'instigating battle'. 'ltyk ywmbšnyh.

*jang* 'fight, battle, war'. yng, Pahl. Texts 81.11. Man. MP jnng, Henning, List.

*jang kardan* 'make war', DkM 565.14.

*jang be nihādan* 'abandon war', DkM 555.11.

*jangēn* 'contentious, aggressive'. Man.Parth. jngyn, Henning, Brahman, p. 111.

*kārezār* 'battle, battlefield'. k'lyc'l, Ayādgār ī Zarērān § 100, Pahl. Texts. 14.3; Kārnamag ch. 10, 17. Man MP k'ryc'r, q'ryz'r, Sundermann, KPT 735, KG 1494; Šbg. 416.

*kōxšīšn* 'combat'. kwhššn, Kārnamag ch. 10, 16.

*kōxšīdan* 'to fight, do battle'.

*kōxšīšn-gyāg* 'battlefield'. kwhššn gyw'k, DkM 115.15.

*nibard* 'battle, war'. nplt, Pahl. Texts 109.5.

*nibardīdan* 'fight, do battle'. Man.Parth. nbrd'd, Henning, MM III.

<sup>90</sup>. Gignoux, *Glossaire*, p. 15; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 79.

<sup>91</sup>. See Bailey, *TPhS*, 1959, p. 105.

*pādrasm* 'battle, war'. p'tlcm, Ayādgār ī Zarērān § 92, Pahl. Texts 13.2.

Cf. Parth. Inscr. [p]tyrzm, Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 120, 3.2, p. 62. Arm. *paterasm*.

*pahikār, paykār* 'battle'. ptk'l, Gr.Bd. 15.1. Cf. Man. MP p(ly)k'r [sic, not phyk'r, with Henning, MM II], Sundermann, KG.

Cf. Man. Parth. pdk'r- 'to fight', Henning, III.

*razm* 'battle'. lcm, DkM 115.19; Ayādgār ī Zarērān §§ 39, 92, 100. Man. MP rzm, Šbg. q 41.

*razmāh* 'battle'. Man. MP rzm'h, Henning, BBB; Sundermann, KPT; Šbg. q 13.

*razmgāh* 'battlefield'. lcmg's, DkM 469.15. Man. Parth. rzmgh, Henning, MM III; Boyce, *Reader*, i, o.

*razm-yōz* 'pugnacious, combative'. lcmyw, Zāds. 30.40. Man. Parth. rzmywz, Henning, BBB.

*mādayān ī razm* 'the Corps of the Immortals'. m'tygd'n Y lcm, Gr. Bd. 28.5, 71.10.<sup>92</sup>

*zambag* 'battle'. Man. Parth. zmbg, Boyce, *Hymn-Cycles; Reader*, ac 3, bh 2. Inscr. Parth. znbk, ŠKZ 3, Gignoux, *Gloss.*, p. 68; Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, p. 79.

*zambāgar* 'combatant'. Man.Parth. zmb'gr, Boyce, *Reader*, ac 4.

'Single combat' is called *mard u mard* 'man and man, man to man' (Tabarī, I, 1034. 3, 2297. 7; Dīnawarī, p. 130.3; Bayhaqī, p. 11; Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 250; cf. also Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 216.)

<sup>92</sup>. See Henning, *Astr. Chapter*, p. 241.

## II. Scribes and secretaries

The Persian word *dabīr* comes from Middle Persian/Pahavi *dibīr* 'scribe', which in turn is derived from Old Persian \**dīpīra*, probably borrowed from Elamite *tup-pi-ra-tipira*.<sup>1</sup> The function of a *dabīr*, 'scribeship', was called *dibīrī(h)* in Middle Persian (Parthian *dibīrīft*).<sup>2</sup>

The Sasanians inherited their chancery system, like other administrative institutions, from the Parthians. There is little extant information about the Parthian chancery or scribeship. Nevertheless, the word *dibīr* and its Aramaic heterogram *SPR'* are well attested in the Parthian documents, and the names of several *dibīrs* occur in the texts.

The oldest attestations of the word are in the Nisa documents, dating from the 1st century B.C., where the names of several *dibīrs* are preserved:

*Rāmānak dibīr* [r'm'nk SPR'], no. 171<sup>3</sup>

*Wiwān (?) dibīr* [wywn SPR'], no. 455

*Aθidāt (?) Atarrāt dibīr* ['tdt/ 'trt SPR'], no. 541

*Mihreñak dibīr* [mtrynk SPR'], no. 604

*Xšētak dibīr* [hšytk SPR'], no. 812

*Barzmēθan dibīr* [brzmytn SPR'], no. 2066<sup>4</sup>

*Bōžan dibīr* [bwzn SPR'], no. 2066

*Rāšnēn dibīr* [(r)šnyn SPR'], no. 2675 (2085).<sup>5</sup>

In all these early Parthian documents, as well as in the

<sup>1</sup> See V.A. Livshits, 'New Parthian documents from South Turkmenistan,' *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, XXV, 1977, p. 168, fn. 17.

<sup>2</sup> MMP *dbyryy*, Henning, MM II; *dpyryh*, Pahl. Texts, 63.2; Parth. *dbyryft*, MM III, Sundermann, KG.

<sup>3</sup> I.M. Diakonoff and V.A. Livshits, *Parthian economic documents from Nisa*, Texts I, London, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Gignoux, *Gloss*.

<sup>5</sup> D.N. MacKenzie, 'Some names from Nisa,' *Peredneasiatskij Sbornik*, IV, Moscow, 1986, p. 107, s.v. 'šnyn.

inscriptions of the early Sasanian period and on a Parthian seal published by de Menasce,<sup>6</sup> the heterogram *SPR'* is used. It is certain, however, that its phonetic equivalent was *dibīr*, since not only is the word designating a 'chief scribe' always spelt *dpyrpty/ dibīrbed* in the Nisa documents (see below), but the form *dpyr* is also used once in the Parthian graffiti of the synagogue of Dura Europos, from the third century A.D.:

\**Sihlxār dibīr wuzurg* [syh'(l?) dpyr LB'] '\*Sihār, the great scribe' (DE 56).<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the forms *dbyr* and *dbyryft* are well attested in Manichaean Parthian, and once *dbyrbyd*.<sup>8</sup>

One comes to the conclusion that the Aramaic *SPR'* was used as a heterogram in Parthian and early Middle Persian. Later on it was replaced by its phonetic equivalent *dpyr* in Middle Persian writings, whereas the Parthian scribes preferred to continue the use of the heterogram *SPR'* for *dibīr* down to the Sasanian period, although they kept the form *dpyrpty* in its phonetic guise.

*Dibīrs* constituted an important group of the third estate of the Sasanian society, so far so that some sources name this estate as the estate of the *dibīrs*. Thus in the *Letter of Tansar* it is stated: 'The third estate was that of the secretaries, and they too are divided into groups and categories, such as writers of official communications, accountants, recorders of verdicts and registrations and covenants, and writers of chronicles; physicians, poets and astronomers are numbered among their ranks'.<sup>9</sup> Similar statements occur in the Arabic sources. Al-Jāhīz, describing the social classes of the time of Ardašīr (226-241 A.D.), the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, wrote 'physicians, scribes and the astrologers (constitute the third class)'.<sup>10</sup> Exactly the same

<sup>6</sup> J.-P. Menasce, 'Un cachet parthe,' *Syria* 39 (1962), pp. 225-30; *m'ny SPR'*.

<sup>7</sup> Geiger, 1956, p. 315 f.

<sup>8</sup> Henning, *BBB*; Sundermann, *KG*.

<sup>9</sup> *Letter of Tansar*, Boyce, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Jāhīz (attrib.), *Tāj*, p. 25.



account is repeated in the 'Ahd Ardašīr<sup>11</sup> and by Miskawayh.<sup>12</sup>

The introduction of the classes was attributed in most Islamic sources, whose information was derived from the Arabic translation of the Pahlavi *Xwadāy-nāmag*, to the legendary king Jamšēd. For example, Ṭabarī wrote: 'He grouped people in four classes: warriors (*muqātila*, Pahl. *artēštārān*), priests (*fuqahā*, Pahl. *āsrōnān*), secretaries (*Kuttāb*, Pahl. *dibīrān*, craftsmen (*ṣunnā*, Pahl. *hutuxšān*) and farmers (*ḥurrāt*, Pahl. *wāstaryōšān*).<sup>13</sup> Bal'amī mentioned them as 1) *laškarīān*, 2) *dānā'ān*, 3) *dibīrān*, 4) *kištārwarzān*, *pēšawarān*.<sup>14</sup>

In another account the art of *dabīrī* was attributed to Ṭahmūrīṭ (Pahl. \*Taxmōrab): 'The first person who introduced scribeship was Ṭahmūrīṭ'.<sup>15</sup> It may reflect the tradition related by Firdawsī,<sup>16</sup> according to which the demons taught the art of writing to Ṭahmūrāṭ.

Secretaries had the important and delicate duty of handling the royal correspondence and of recording the orders, verdicts, speeches, words of counsel, exhortations, harangues, testaments, and other utterances of the king and of his high officials. They were also charged with recording everyday events, making chronicles, and some of them served in various state offices (*dīvāns*) or were engaged in writing, compiling, or copying books.

### Scribes as important political figures

Throughout the whole Sasanian period there were secretaries who appeared as important political figures. A number of them are mentioned as such in the inscriptions of the early Sasanian

<sup>11</sup> 'Ahd-i Ardašīr, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, Beirut, 1387/1967, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Miskawayh, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 180.

<sup>14</sup> Bal'amī, p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Kayyām, p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Šāhnāma, I, p. 36.

kings and dignitaries.

In the inscription of Shapur I (241-72 A.D.) at the Ka'ba-ye Zardušt, a part of which is devoted to the members of the royal family and the dignitaries of his time and of the time of his father Ardašīr (226-41 A.D.), we come across the name A(r)štād, the '(letter) scribe' [*pad frawardag dibīr* in Parth.] from Ray, from the Mihrān family, mentioned among the retinue of Shapur I (M.Pers. 1. 34, Parth. 1. 28, Greek 1. 66).<sup>17</sup>

'š't ZY dpywr ZY mtr'n ZY MN rdy

'ršt mtrn pty prwrk SPR'

ΑΣΤΑΤ ΜΕΕΡΑΝ ΕΠΙ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΩΝ

In the Middle Persian and Parthian inscriptions in the synagogue at Dura Europos several *dibīrs* are mentioned among eminent visitors. They were probably the high army secretaries accompanying the Iranian army in its campaigns:

yzd'nth[m] pr[n]bg dpywr zhmy / Yazdān Farrōbay dibīr ī zhmy<sup>18</sup>

'Yazdān-Farrōbay the scribe of the zhmy'. (DE 42)

yzd'npysy dpywr W d[p]ywr ZY ldky/lwky / Yazdān-pēs dibīr ud dibīr ī ldky/lwky<sup>19</sup>

'Yazdān-pēs the scribe and the scribe of ldky/ lwky' (DE 43.3-4)

lšnky dpyr / Rašnag dibīr 'Rašnag the scribe' (DE 46.3)

mtlwlwspndy (?) dpyr / Mahraspand (?) dibīr 'Mahraspand (?) the scribe' (DE 47.2)

hwrnzdy dpywr / Hormazd dibīr 'Hormazd the scribe' (DE 49.2)

<sup>17</sup> Back, p. 365.

<sup>18</sup> Geiger, pp. 297 ff.

<sup>19</sup> J. Harmatta, *Kara-Tepe*, I, p. 87, proposes the reading *lwky* 'messenger'.

'*prš'm SPR*' / *Abursām dibīr* 'Abursām the scribe' (DE 54, Parth.)

One *dibīr* of Shapur I, \*Abasā (or \*Afsā) of Ḥarrān, left an inscription in which he reported having made a statue (*pahikar*) of the king, who in return had rewarded him with gold, silver, male and female servants, gardens and riches (*xwāstag*).<sup>20</sup> He may have been more than a *dibīr*, however, probably also a governor. During the reign of Xusraw I Anūšīrawān (531-79) a governor of Ctesiphon was addressed as *dabīrbad* 'Chief secretary'.<sup>21</sup>

Among the princes and the dignitaries who arrived in Asōrestān, at the place where the monument of Paikuli was made by order of King Narseh (293-302), is mentioned the secretary of finances, though his name is not mentioned in either version of the Paikuli inscription:

*PWN št(r-'m'l) dp(yw)r* (M. Pers. 16)  
*p]y ḥštr-'ḥmr SPR'* (Parth. 14)<sup>22</sup>

In the inscription of Shapur Sagānšāh, brother of Shapur II (309-79), at Persepolis, the title of a certain dignitary called Narseh can be reconstructed as *dibīr* (ŠPs I, 1.7).<sup>23</sup>

*nrsh Y d(p)[ywr?]* / *Narseh ī dibīr* 'Narseh the scribe'.

He is associated with such dignitaries as *Sagestān handarzbed* 'the counsellor of Sagestan', Narseh the Magian, \*Wēn, satrap of Zarang:

*[W] 'p'lyk p'ls'z't W sk'z't / [ud] abārīg Pārs-āzād ud Sag-āzād*  
'and other nobles of Pars and Zarang'.

The last phrase suggests that the scribe belonged to the rank of *āzādān*, i.e. the fourth rank of the Sasanian nobility.

In one of the graffiti of Kara-Tepe, old Termez, a certain

<sup>20</sup> Henning, *BSOS* 9, 1939, 825, n. 4 [= *Selected Papers* I, 603].

<sup>21</sup> Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 231.

<sup>22</sup> Skjærvø, *Paikuli*, 3.1, pp. 42; 3.2, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> Back, p. 493.

scribe or secretary (*dpyr*) named *zyk / Zīg* is mentioned. He seems to have been the secretary of a Sasanian chief or a ruler of the boundary region, who ordered the inscription.<sup>24</sup>

One of Xusraw's secretaries (*kuttāb*), called Pābag son of \*Beh-ruwān,<sup>25</sup> is said to have had the duty of taking the preliminary steps in carrying out Anūšīrawān's land reforms. Later on, he was appointed chief of the military chancery (*dīwān al-ḵund*) and enjoyed much influence and prestige. In fact, his post is comparable to a present-day 'Minister of War, or Defence'. He is described as having such qualities as 'good descent, manliness, riches and efficiency'. The scene of a military parade arranged by this \*Beh-ruwān is described in some Arabic sources. He had the audacity to reproach the king, once for not having been present at the parade and again for not having been completely armed.<sup>26</sup>

*Dibīrs* were authorized to record their own names at the ends of inscriptions. They apparently had the duty of preparing the draft of the inscriptions from the verbal orders of the kings, or the dignitaries, and if necessary of translating them into other languages (e.g. Parthian and Greek). For example, the *dibīr* of Shapur's inscription on the Ka'ba-ye Zardušt, recorded only in the Parthian version (1.30):

*dstnypyk ZNH LY 'hwrmzd SPR' šylk SPR' BRY*<sup>27</sup>

'This is my handwriting: Ohrmazd, the scribe, son of Šērag the scribe'.

The *dibīr* of the inscription of Kirdēr (Kartir) at Naqš-e Rājab was one Bōxtag.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> V. Lukonin, *Kara-Tepe*, I, pp. 41, 180.

<sup>25</sup> Instead of Nahruwān, Bēruwān, etc., as in the MSS. See 'Warriors' above, n. 86.

<sup>26</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 963; Dīnawarī, p. 74; Bal'amī, pp. 1047 ff.; *Šāhnāma*, VIII, pp. 62 ff.; Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 231; *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., pp. 297 ff.

<sup>27</sup> Back, p. 371.

<sup>28</sup> KNRb 1.31; Back, p. 487.

A number of the inscribed seals of Sasanian *dibīrs* have been published:

*mštky l'y dpywr / Maštag Ray dibīr* 'Maštag, scribe of Ray'<sup>29</sup>  
*m'lsḥydy dpywr / Mār-sahī dibīr* 'Mār-sahī the scribe'.<sup>30</sup>  
*b' (pw)[dy]y dpywr / Bābōy dibīr* 'Bābōy the scribe'.<sup>31</sup>

From the excavation at Taxt-e Sulaimān two seals of the *dibīrs* of the famous fire-temple Adur Gušnasp have been discovered:

*mtrky ZY [...]hy dpywr / Mihrag ī [...] dibīr* 'Mihrag ... the scribe'.<sup>32</sup>  
*bwḥtwky ZY 'mtr'n ZY 'twl ZY gwsnspy dpywr / Bōxtōg ī Amihrān ī Adur ī Gušnasp dibīr*  
'Bōxtōg, son of Amihr, the scribe of the Fire of Gušnasp'.<sup>33</sup>

Among the owners of seals in Sasanian times was also a Christian named Sebōxt:

*3 bwḥt dpywr / se-bōxt dibīr* 'Se-bōxt the scribe'.<sup>34</sup>

*Dibīrs* played an important part in the political events of the Sasanian period; for example, after the death of Yazdegird I (399-421) there arose a political crisis concerning his succession. The Persian nobles decided not to choose any of his sons, including Bahrām (later king Bahrām V Gōr, 420-38) as his successor. Instead, they nominated a certain prince called Xusraw. Among these nobles there were three *dibīrs*: Gōdarz, secretary of the army (*Kātib al-ḥund*), Gušnasp-Adur (*Ḥušnas-ādar*), the finance secretary (*kātib al-xarāḥ*), and

<sup>29</sup> Brunner, p. 141, n. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Bivar, p. 44, no. 120195; see Gignoux, *Noms propres*, no. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Gignoux-Gyselen, 1982, p. 51, no. 20.3.

<sup>32</sup> Göbl, p. 44, no. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Göbl, p. 52, no. 601.

<sup>34</sup> Gignoux-Gyselen, 1987, p. 246, no. MCB 20.1

Ḥuwānōy, the chief scribe (*ṣāhib al-dīwān al-rasā'il*), who was sent to Mundir in Ḥīra to deter him from protecting Bahrām, who was living there, having finished his education under the tutorship of Mundir. When Ḥuwānōy met Bahrām, however, he came to an agreement with him.<sup>35</sup> Later both Ḥuwānōy and Gušnasp were mentioned as secretaries for Bahrām.<sup>36</sup>

*Dibīrs* were also reported to have been consulted on knotty problems; an example is Xusraw Anūšīrawān's consultation with his secretary Yazdigird and his chief *mowbad* Ardašīr about his proposed campaign against the Hephthalites (*Haitālīān*) and the Khaqan of China.<sup>37</sup>

'The king got the assembly room ready in his palace, to which went the king-worshipping knights along with the chief *mowbad* Ardašīr and others, such as Šāpūr and Yazdgird the scribe, and all wise men capable of showing the way ...'. Then, having explained the situation, the king asked them: 'What do you see in all this? What should we do with the Turks and the Khaqan of China?' The king's counsellors advised him not to make war with them. Nevertheless, the king decided to campaign against the Hephthalites and the Khaqan of China.

In the course of the story the same personalities are often summoned for consultation.<sup>38</sup> They, together with some other wise men, were present at the seven catechismal sessions held in the presence of Xusraw to test young Buzurgmihr Bōxtagān.<sup>39</sup>

The successor to the throne was customarily designated in the presence of the chief secretary and the chief *mowbad*. Thus Shapur II designated his brother Ardašīr as his successor in the

<sup>35</sup> Tabarī, I, 859; Dīnawarī, p. 57; Bal'amī, 934; Miskawayh, I, p. 80; Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 223; *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., pp. 224 f.; *Šāhnāma*, VII, pp. 285-88; Nöldeke, p. 92, n.1.

<sup>36</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VII, p. 308, 82-84.

<sup>37</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VII, p. 161 ff.; trl. VI, 1271 ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VII, p. 164, v. 1885; p. 169, v. 1982.

<sup>39</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 116-46, esp. vv. 1367, 1386, 1416, 1425, 1495; cf. Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 238; *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., 301 ff.

presence of the secretary (*dibīr*), the chief priest (*mowbadān mowbad*) and Ardašīr himself.<sup>40</sup>

When a careful investigation was required concerning a complaint against the king's agents or his tax-collectors, or against the agents of the members of the royal family, the king (in this case Anūšīrawān) would appoint one reliable man (*amīn*) from among his *dabīrs* (*kuttāb*), one from among the priests, and one from his attendants for the purpose.<sup>41</sup> It was in compliance with the same rule that after the imprisonment of Xusraw II (590-628) in 628 A.D. his son Šērōya (Kawād II, r. 628) appointed his chief secretary (*ra'īs al-kuttāb* = *mihtar i dabīrān*), called Aštād Gušnasp, to investigate his father's alleged crimes.<sup>42</sup>

The powerful position of a *dibīr*, however, carried with it the risk of severe punishment, or even death. For example, Dād-bindād (Dād-windād), the chief secretary of the army (*kātib; wazīr* according to Bal'amī) under the last Arsacid king, Ardavān IV (ca. 216-24) was put to death by Ardašīr after his defeat of Ardavān.<sup>43</sup> A secretary of Xusraw Anūšīrawān who ventured an objection to the king's fiscal reforms was also put to death.<sup>44</sup> The same king ordered the execution of eighty officials accused of corruption and oppression, among whom there were fifty secretaries (*kuttāb*).<sup>45</sup>

*Dibīrs* enjoyed certain privileges. They were among those exempted from taxes, like the royal princes (*ahl al-buyūtāt*, i.e. Pahl. *wāspuhrān*), the grantees (*al-'uṣamā'*, i.e. Pahl. *wuzurgān*), warriors (*al-muqātīla*, i.e. *artēštārān*), priests (*al-harābiḍa*, i.e.

<sup>40</sup> Šāhnāma, VII, p. 253, vv. 606 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Miskawayh, I, p. 105.

<sup>42</sup> Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 253; *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., p. 354; Šāhnāma, IX, 255 (where the persons are named); Bal'amī, p. 1160; Dīnawarī, p. 112; Ṭabarī, I, p. 1046, where the name is Asfād-Jušnas, from Ardašīr-Xurrah, head of a regiment (*katība*).

<sup>43</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 819; Bal'amī, p. 882.

<sup>44</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 961; Bal'amī, p. 1046; Jāhšiyārī, p. 5; Miskawayh, I, p. 98; Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 231; *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., p. 296.

<sup>45</sup> Jāhšiyārī, p. 9.

*hērbadān*, or rather *āsrōnān*) and servants of the king.<sup>46</sup> They were authorized, like the king and the judges, to ride on 'gentle and steady horses (*himlāj*)',<sup>47</sup> and wore a special dress, except when accompanying the army.<sup>48</sup>

People of low extraction (*bī-aṣl*), common persons (*bāzārī*) or the offspring of the servants were not as a rule allowed to become a *dabīr*.<sup>49</sup> Firdawsī narrates the story of a shoe-maker who asked that his son be educated as a *dabīr*, in exchange for lending the king a considerable amount of money, but his request was refused.<sup>50</sup> Anūšīrawān prohibited the sons of commoners (*abnā' al-'amma*) from receiving a good education (*ta'addub*) because, he said, when the sons of people of low class are educated, they seek high positions, and when they obtain them, they take the liberty of humiliating the nobles.<sup>51</sup>

The school in which the *dibīrs* were trained was called *dibīristān*.<sup>52</sup>

The court secretaries were selected from among the young *dibīrs* by examination, conducted by the chief secretaries. After the names of the persons accepted had been submitted to the king, they were counted among the royal attendants. They were forbidden to associate with anyone not sanctioned by the king.<sup>53</sup>

Those less qualified in handwriting and intelligence were assigned to high officials (*kārdār*).<sup>54</sup> Apart from his professional

<sup>46</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 962; Dīnawarī, p. 73; Miskawayh, I, p. 99.

<sup>47</sup> Jāhšiyārī, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn al-Balxī, p. 93.

<sup>50</sup> Šāhnāma, VIII, pp. 297-99.

<sup>51</sup> Ṭa'alībī, p. 68.

<sup>52</sup> Pahl. Texts, pp. 63.1, 69.13.

<sup>53</sup> Jāhšiyārī, pp. 3-4; *Nihāya*, in Grignaschi, 1973, p. 105 (describing the rules of the time of Ardašīr); *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., p. 184.

<sup>54</sup> Šāhnāma, VII, p. 173, vv. 320 ff, describing the situation of the time of Ardašīr.

skills (see below), a *dibīr* was supposed to be a person of insight (*ahl al-baṣar*), continence (*ahl al-ʿifāf*) and efficiency (*ahl al-kifāya*); he was to be assigned tasks in which he was experienced.<sup>55</sup> He was expected to be 'the king's tongue' for those remote from him, his interpreter.<sup>56</sup> The king expected his scribes to have an elegant style, a good knowledge of lexicography, and the ability to write with conciseness.<sup>57</sup>

The estate of *dibīrs* was subdivided into several groups, the establishment of which was attributed to the mythical king Īšānšād. Īšānšād writes:<sup>58</sup> 'The first person who introduced (different) classes of people, arranged (different) groups of scribes and designated their ranks, was Īšānšād, son of \*Wiwanghan'.<sup>59</sup> According to Ibn al-Balxī:<sup>60</sup> 'He ordered that some members of the first estate (i.e. that of wise men) should learn scribeship (*dabīrī*) and accountancy (*ḥisāb*)'.

As we have seen, in the *Letter of Tansar* seven groups of officials are mentioned, the first four being categories of *dibīr*, each with specific functions:

### 1) Official correspondents

The Pahlavi title for a correspondent was *frawardag* or *nāmag dibīr* 'scribe concerned with letters'. We have already met the term attested in the inscription of Shapur at the Ka'ba-ye Zardušt: *Arštād Mihrān pad frawardag dibīr* (Parth. version, 28).

The kind of Pahlavi script used for letter-writing, probably a cursive script, was named in the Islamic sources *farwarda dafīrīh* (فرورده دفیره) <Pahl. *frawardag-dibīrīh*).

<sup>55</sup> Īšānšād, p. 6, citing Shapur I's testament to his son.

<sup>56</sup> *Nihāya*, in Grignaschi, 1973, p. 105 (describing the rules of the time of Ardašīr); *Nihāya*, Pers. trl., p. 184; Ibn al-Balxī, pp. 92-93, citing Anūšīrawān; Īšānšād, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Īšānšād (attrib.), *Tāz*, p. 138; trl. Pellat, 158.

<sup>58</sup> Īšānšād, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Corrupted to 'wnjh'n in the Arabic text.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn al-Balxī, pp. 30-31.

The ideal correspondent was expected to have beautiful handwriting (*xūb-nibēg*), a swift hand (*rag-nibēg*), subtle knowledge (*bārīk-dānišn*), nimble fingers (*\*kāmgar-angust*) and wise speech (*frazānag-saxwan*) – all qualities laid claim to by the young applicant in the story of 'Xusraw and the page'.<sup>61</sup> He also had to be skilful, vigilant and quickwitted, so that, if the king dropped a hint, he could understand the intention fully and express it in a fluent, smooth and pleasant style. He was also supposed to have some notion of various sciences.<sup>62</sup>

At the Sasanian court there were bilingual *dibīrs* who also served as interpreters. The Parthian and Greek inscriptions of the early Sasanian kings were written by such bilingual secretaries. Ṭabarī<sup>63</sup> mentioned an Indian secretary who lived at the court of Xusraw II. The same king always had an Arab *dibīr* as well, for example 'Adī b. Zayd 'Ibādī, whose father had also served this king and his father Hurmazd IV (579-90).<sup>64</sup>

It was customary for some *dibīrs* to accompany the army into the field, and the commander-in-chief was supposed to consult them.<sup>65</sup> The oldest evidence in this respect is the presence of certain *dibīrs* in the Dura Europos campaign of Shapur I. The graffiti in the Dura Europos synagogue are the fruit of their activities. Sometimes such *dibīrs* were also charged with reporting to the king in secret and spying for him; for example, when Bahrām Čōbīn, the famous commander of Hurmazd, became angry with this king and decided to revolt, Yazdak the scribe, together with another official, fled by night to inform the king.<sup>66</sup> The same Yazdak, with the title *kātib al-ḵund* 'scribe of the army', was mentioned among the attendants of Xusraw

<sup>61</sup> *Pahl. Texts*, p. 27. See Boyce, 'MP lit.', p. 63, n. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Balxī, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 1053.

<sup>64</sup> Ṭabarī, I, pp. 1016 f., 1024.

<sup>65</sup> Īšānšād, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Dīnawarī, p. 86.

I.<sup>67</sup> The same title was borne by one of the grandees in the time of Yazdegerd I.<sup>68</sup> The name of this function is not attested in the Pahlavi sources, but given that the form *dabīr-i sipāh* occurs in the *Šāhnāma*, the Middle Persian title may be conjectured as *\*spāh-dibīr* or *\*gund-dibīr*. One of these 'army secretaries' called Farrox took part in the seventh session of the dialogues held in the presence of Xusraw Anūšīrawān, in which Buzurgmihr and other sages participated.<sup>69</sup> It may be deduced from the *Šāhnāma* that the 'army secretary' was entrusted with the function of issuing rations. In one of his 'royal verdicts' (*tawqī'*) Xusraw Anūšīrawān advised this functionary to supervise the payment of pensions to the orphans of dead soldiers. He was mentioned as *dabīr* in the *Šāhnāma*,<sup>70</sup> but Bundārī in his translation used the term *kātib al-ḡayš* 'secretary of the army'.<sup>71</sup>

In a treatise about the rules of government attributed to Ardašīr and preserved in the *Niyāya*,<sup>72</sup> it is maintained that before a war began, the tax-collectors (*ḡubāt*) together with the scribes were sent to the enemy to be arbitrators (*ḡakam*) between the king and the enemy. A judge also accompanied them, to be available in case of differences occurring. He was called *\*spāh-dādwar*.<sup>73</sup>

A passage of the *Nihāya*<sup>74</sup> shows well the importance of such secretaries, although it is tinged with exaggeration. It is stated that Ardašīr despatched together with the commander of the army (*ṣāḡīb al-ḡayš*) a scribe who was invested with the power of taking necessary measures regarding the movement or staying in position of the army. The army should neither move off nor stay in position except in accordance with his advice and with his permission, and it should not disobey his advice in this

<sup>67</sup> Dīnawarī, p. 90; Browne, *Nihāya*, p. 240.

<sup>68</sup> Dīnawarī, p. 57.

<sup>69</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 142, v. 1493; IX, p. 43, v. 556.

<sup>70</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 272, v. 3756.

<sup>71</sup> Bundārī, II, p. 161.

<sup>72</sup> *Nihāya*, in Grignaschi, 1973, p. 106.

<sup>73</sup> Hübschmann, I, p. 136.

respect.

Certain *dibīrs* were entrusted with the secret correspondence. They were called *kātib al-sirr* in the Arabic sources. The Pahlavi term was probably *\*rāz-dibīr*, and the variant script used by such scribes was called *rāz-dibīrīh* / *-dafīrīh* in the Islamic sources.<sup>75</sup> For example, Xusraw II, having killed Bindōya (Windōya) intended to kill his brother Bistām (Wistahm) also. He therefore ordered his *kātib al-sirr* to write a letter to Bistām summoning him for consultation.<sup>76</sup> The office of confidential secretary survived into the Abbasid period.<sup>77</sup>

## 2) Accountants

The accountants were further divided into sub-groups:

The *financial secretaries*: The Pahlavi term designating these secretaries is *(h)āmār-dibīr* (*št(r 'm'l) dp(yw)r / ḡstr 'ḡmr SPR'*), attested in the Paikuli inscription.<sup>78</sup> The script used by them was named *ṣahr-hamār-dafīrīh* in the Islamic sources.<sup>79</sup> They handled tax affairs. Some were mentioned as *kātib al-xarāj* in the Arabic sources. During the reign of Xusraw Anūšīrawān they were charged with assessing the value of the land as the basis for a new system of taxation.<sup>80</sup> The court accountants bore the title *\*kadag-(h)āmār-dibīr*, the script used by them being named *kadag-hamār-dafīrīh* in the Islamic sources. There were also accountants attached to the treasury called *\*ganj-(h)āmār-dibīr*, with their own special kind of script called *kanj-hamār-dabīrīh* in the Islamic sources. The term *dabīr-i xazāna* was also in use in the Islamic period.<sup>81</sup> One of his

<sup>74</sup> *Nihāya*, in Grignaschi, 1973, p. 107.

<sup>75</sup> ḡamza Iṣfahānī, pp. 64 f.; Ibn al-Nadīm, pp. 13 f.

<sup>76</sup> Dīnawarī, p. 106.

<sup>77</sup> Dīnawarī, p. 389.

<sup>78</sup> Paikuli, MPers. I. 16, Parth. I. 14; Skjærvø, 3. I, p. 42, 3.2, p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> Xwārazmī, p. 118, where all the following special script names are mentioned.

<sup>80</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 960; Miskawayh, I, p. 98.

duties was to make a report of the inventory of the royal treasury to the king at the beginning of the new year. Thus Firdawsī relates that at the beginning of the new year the *dabīr* of Wahrām V (Gōr) went to the king to let him know that the royal treasury was empty.<sup>82</sup> The chief secretary of taxation (*al-dabīrbad*, *kātib al-xarā*) was among the first state officials to congratulate the king in the Now Rōz audience.<sup>83</sup> The title of the accountants of the royal stables was *\*āxwar-(h)āmār-dibīr*, and their special kind of script was called *āxwar- (āhwar-) hamār-dafīrih* in the Islamic sources.

The title of the accountants attached to the fire temples was *ātaxšān-(h)āmār-dibīr*, and the special kind of script used by them was called *ātaš(ān)-(h)āmār-dabīrih*. Some inscribed seals of such men attached to the Adur Gušnasp fire-temple have been found:

*Bōxtag ī Amīhr ī Adur ī Gušnasp dibīr* 'Bōxtag, son of Amīhr, scribe of the fire-temple Gušnasp'.<sup>84</sup>

Accountants of pious foundations were known as *\*ruwānagān-(h)āmār-dibīr*, and the special script used by them was called *ruwānagān-dafīrih* in the Islamic sources.

Each canton of the Sasanian territory had its own tax accountants, called in Pahlavi *\*šahr-dibīr* (cf. Syriac *šhrdwyr*)<sup>85</sup> and in Arabic *kātib al-kūra*. In a Syriac martyr text<sup>86</sup> it is related that a *šahr-dibīr* together with the judge (*rad*) and the chief *mowbed* of Yazdgird II (439-57 A.D.) was in charge of the trial of the bishop Pethion. In a passage of the *Kārnāmag* of Anūšīrawān<sup>87</sup> concerning the measures taken by this king for collecting taxes in a fair way, it is stated that 'I have appointed

in each land a man worthy of confidence (*amīn*),<sup>88</sup> next to the governor, to surprise him... and I ordered that the judge (*qāzī*), the scribe of the canton (*kātib al-kūra*), the man worthy of confidence of the people of the region (*amīn ahl al-balad*) and the governor (*'āmil*) should submit their (particular) accounts to the *dīwān*'.

### 3) Judicial secretaries

Secretaries responsible for recording judicial decisions and verdicts were probably called *\*dād-dibīrs*. (A certain Xwadāy-būd, with the title *dibīr*, mentioned as a judicial commentator, may have belonged to this group<sup>89</sup>). The special script kind of script used by them was called *dād-dafīrih* in the Arabic sources.<sup>90</sup>

### 4) Chroniclers

Certain *dibīrs* were responsible for recording daily events. One of them, a secretary of Shapur II called Xwarrahbūd (Arm. Xořohbowt), was captured by the Romans. In the Roman empire he learned Greek and wrote a book on the deeds of Shapur and Julian. Later he also translated into Greek a Persian book on the history of primitive times written by one of his Persian companions in captivity, Rāst-saxwan (Arm. Rastohown).<sup>91</sup> Sergius, an interpreter for Xusraw Anūšīrawān, summarized the court archives and translated his summary into Greek; this work was used by the Greek historian Agathias.<sup>92</sup>

According to Balāḍurī,<sup>93</sup> in a report pertaining to the late Sasanian period, the king's orders and decisions were recorded

<sup>81</sup> Bayhaqī.

<sup>82</sup> *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 392, vv. 1275-76.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Muqaffa', *al-Tā*, in Grignaschi, 1966, pp. 103-129.

<sup>84</sup> Göbl, p. 52, no. 601; cf. p. 44, no. 15. (n. 32).

<sup>85</sup> See J. Corluy, 'Historia Sancti Mar Pethion Martyris,' *Analecta Bollandiana*, 7 (1888), p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> Hoffmann, *Auszüge*, p. 63-65.

<sup>87</sup> Miskawayh, I, p. 102; trl. Grignaschi, 1966, pp. 18, 33, n. 21.

<sup>88</sup> The Pahl. equivalent may be *'wstwb'l* = Man. MP *'wystw'r*, i.e. *awestwār* 'reliable'.

<sup>89</sup> *MHD*, I, p. 2, l. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Xwārazmī, p. 117.

<sup>91</sup> Moses of Khorene, ch. 70, trl. Thomson, p. 217.

<sup>92</sup> Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 76.

in his presence, and another official copied them into the royal monthly diary; the king put his seal on the diary, which was kept in the treasury. It is also related that Ardašīr charged two intelligent pages, probably two junior *dibīrs*, with dictating and recording what he said in the presence of his courtiers while he was drinking. The next day his *dibīr* would read out his words to him.<sup>94</sup>

Hormazd IV, after his imprisonment, asked for a *dibīr* to be sent to him with a book, in order to read to him ancient stories and the exploits of the kings.<sup>95</sup>

Those *dibīrs* whose duty it was to know the rank, position and special place of each courtier probably belonged to this group; in instances of ambiguity or dispute they were consulted.<sup>96</sup>

### Copyists

Little is known about the *dibīrs* who engaged in writing down and copying secular and religious books in the Sasanian period. Those who transcribed or copied Zoroastrian religious books, especially the Avesta, were probably called \**dēn-dibīr*, and the Avestan script was named in Pahl. *dēn-dibīrīh*, and in the Islamic sources *dīn-difīrīh*.<sup>97</sup>

Manichaean *dibīrs*, who were regarded as a class of the elect,<sup>98</sup> played an important part in the expansion of their religion. They were well trained in writing the Manichaean script. The remaining fragments of the manuscripts found in Turfan, in Chinese Turkistan, usually show the skill of their copyists. Some pieces are outstanding specimens of calligraphic art.

The *dibīrs* were usually among the members of the missionary

<sup>94</sup> Jāhīz (attrib.), *Tāʾī*, p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> *Šāhnāma*, IX, pp. 13-14, vv. 56-57, 65.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn al-Balxī, p. 49.

<sup>97</sup> Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 91; Hamza Iṣfahānī, p. 64; Ibn al-Nadīm, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> See Henning, *BBB*, p. 28, II. 352 ff., where the *dbyr'n nyw<'>n* 'brave scribes' are honoured before the 'rd'w'wn p'k'n 'pure righteous' (electi).

delegations sent out to propagate Manichaeism. In a passage of a Middle Persian text concerning a mission sent by Mani to the eastern part of Iran,<sup>99</sup> it is said that: 'When the Apostle of Light was in the city of Hulwān, he summoned Mar Ammo, the teacher, who knew the Parthian script and language (\**pahlawānīg dibīrīh ud izwān*), and sent him to Abaršahr, accompanied by Ardašān, the prince, and the brother scribes, together with book-painters (*nibēgān-nigār*)'. In another passage of a Manichaean text in Parthian<sup>100</sup> we read thus: 'and when the Apostle was in Weh-Ardaxšīr, he sent Patīg, the teacher, Adda, the bishop, and Mani, the scribe, to Rome (i.e. the Roman territories)'. Another passage in Middle Persian<sup>101</sup> concerning the last-mentioned mission reads thus: 'Then the lord (=Mani) sent to Adda three scribes, the Evangelion (and) two other books'.

The scribes and copyists usually remain unknown, their names being rarely mentioned. In the introduction to a hymn-book found among the Turfan fragments,<sup>102</sup> which begins with the date of copying of the book, a *dibīr* is mentioned who 'started writing (the hymn-book) by order of the leaders of the religion, but was not able to finish it'. The text then continues that the manuscript remained incomplete until a certain preacher (*xrōh-xwān*) named Yazdāmad ordered one Naxurīg-rōšn (who writes of himself in the first person in the last paragraph of the surviving text) to finish it. He was also assisted by other *dibīrs* (*hammis dibīrān*).

The chief secretary bore the title *dibīrbed*, attested in the Parthian documents from Nisa as *dpyrpty* (nos. 90.7=1543.7, 99.5=1469.5, 258.1=2150, 209.1=2172.1).<sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Henning, *MM* II, p. 11 f.

<sup>100</sup> Sundermann, *KG*, pp. 170-74.

<sup>101</sup> Henning, *MM* II, p. 10.

<sup>102</sup> Müller, *Mahrnāmag*, II. 160f.

<sup>103</sup> Gignoux, *Glossaire*, p. 50, s.v. *dpyr*. (New numbering, I.M. Diakonoff & V.A. Livshits, *Parthian economic documents from Nisa*, I-III, London, 1976-79.)



In the inscription of Shapur I on the Ka'ba-ye Zardušt *dibīrbed* is mentioned among the royal dignitaries. A certain Mard with this title was named among Ardašīr's retinue (ŠKZ, MP 1. 29, Parth. 1. 24). In the same inscription a dignitary called Ohrmazd, with the same title, was mentioned among Shapur I's retinue; his father had borne the same name and the same title (ŠKZ, MP 1. 34, Parth. 1. 28). This latter dignitary is to be identified with the 'whrmzdyd dbyrbyd / Ohrmezd *dibīrbed* mentioned in a Manichaean Parthian text<sup>104</sup> in company with a Sasanian lord (*xwadāy*) named Pērōz. They seem to have given Mani letters of safe-conduct, obviously in obedience of Shapur's orders. The same title is also attested in Sogdian documents (*δp'yrpt*, *δpyrpt*).<sup>105</sup> It was borrowed into Armenian as *dprapet*.<sup>106</sup>

In the Arabic and Persian sources this title was given as *dabīrbad*,<sup>107</sup> *dabīrfadl* (*dbyrfdl*),<sup>108</sup> and *daḡīrbad* (*dfyrbd*).<sup>109</sup> In some of the sources it was translated *ra'is kuttāb al-rasā'il*.<sup>110</sup>

Another title for the chief secretary, also known from Parthian times, was Pahlavi *dibīrān mahist*. The name and the title of the chief secretary of Wištāsp is mentioned in the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* as \**Abarsām dibīrān mahist*.<sup>111</sup> It was translated in the Persian sources as *mihtar-e dabīrān*, *mihtar dabīr*, or *buzurg dabīr*.<sup>112</sup> The title *wuzurg dibīr* also occurs in an inscription at Dura.

The fact that the title *dabīrbad* was used in the *kitāb al-Tāǧ*<sup>113</sup>

<sup>104</sup>. Sundermann, KG, 1658.

<sup>105</sup>. Mugh II and III.

<sup>106</sup>. Hübschmann, p. 145.

<sup>107</sup>. Ya'qūbī, I, p. 202; Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 104.

<sup>108</sup>. Ibn al-Balxī, p. 49 with n. 3.

<sup>109</sup>. Jāhiz (attrib.), *Tāǧ*, pp. 77 (with n. 2), 160, 173.

<sup>110</sup>. Dīnawarī, p. 112.

<sup>111</sup>. *Pahl. Texts*, p. 2.I, § 9, written 'pl'hym Y dpyr'n mhst.

<sup>112</sup>. Bal'amī, p. 1160; *Šāhnāma*, VII, p. 127, v. 271.

<sup>113</sup>. Grignaschi, 1966, p. 103.

for the *kātib al-xarāǧ* indicates that he was chief secretary for taxation. The official so designated was the first person, after the king, to deliver a speech at the Nowrūz ceremony. There must surely have been other categories of chief secretary.

The chief priest (*mowbad*), the chief secretary (*dabīrbad*) and the chief religious teacher (*hērbad*) were present at public pleadings.<sup>114</sup> It was also reported that on 'delicate' occasions the king dined only with three of his attendants, the chief *mowbad*, the *dabīrbad*, and the chief of cavalry (*ra's al-'asāwira*).<sup>115</sup> The *dabīrbad* was expected to be the wisest, the most intelligent and the most vigilant of men.<sup>116</sup>

After the Arab conquest of Iran, the Muslim rulers did not dispense with Iranian secretaries, who continued their service in different government offices. Islamic sources abound with the names of such Iranian secretaries enjoying admiration and esteem.

<sup>114</sup>. Jāhiz (attrib.), *Tāǧ*, p. 160.

<sup>115</sup>. *ibidem*, p. 173.

<sup>116</sup>. Ibn al-Balxī, p. 49.

### III. Dehqāns

The Persian word *dehqān* is the Arabicized form of Syriac *dhqn*,<sup>1</sup> borrowed from Pahlavi *dehgān*,<sup>2</sup> the older form of which was *\*dahigān*. It was borrowed into Armenian as *dehkan*.<sup>3</sup> The original meaning of the word was 'pertaining to *deh*', the latter not in the later sense of 'village', but in its original sense of 'land, country' (from Old Persian *dahyu-*).

*Dehgān* was used in the late Sasanian period to designate a class of landed magnates. In a chapter of the *Muǰmal al-tawārīx* devoted to the titles of the kings and the dignitaries of pre-Islamic Persia (*Aǰam*), *dehqān* is defined as 'chief' (*ra'īs*) and lord (*xudāwand*) of estates (*ziyā' u amlāk*).<sup>4</sup> From a passage of the apocalyptic Pahlavi treatise *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* it may be inferred that the *dehgāns* were considered inferior in rank to *āzādān* 'nobles' and *wuzurgān* 'grandees':<sup>5</sup>

...was tis sōzēnd ud wināhēnd ud mān az mānīgān, deh az dahigān, āzādīh ud wuzurgīh ud dehgānīh ... ō nēstīh rasēd

'... (the offspring of the demon Xešm) will burn and destroy many things, and (they will deprive) the house-owners of their houses and land-owners of their lands; the classes of nobles, grandees and land-magnates... will come to nought'.

In a passage of the *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag*, describing the position of different people in Paradise, they are also mentioned as inferior to *kadag-xwadāyān* 'householders':<sup>6</sup>

u-m dīd ān ī was zarrēn gāh ud wistarag ī xūb ud bālīšn abāg bōb ī passazag kē-šān padīš nišast hēnd kadag-xwadāyān ud \*dehgān <ān> ruwān...

<sup>1</sup> Margoliouth, p. 84a.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. ZWY, 4.7 (K20 MT'K'n), 4.54 (d'hk'n).

<sup>3</sup> Hübschmann, p. 139, no. 186.

<sup>4</sup> *Muǰmal*, p. 420.

<sup>5</sup> ZWY, 4.7.

<sup>6</sup> AV, ed. Haug-West, ch. 15.10; ed. Gignoux, ch. 15.4, pp. 66 f., trl. p. 169; ed. Vahman, p. 112 f., trl. p. 200.

'and I saw many golden thrones with good bedding and cushions with suitably fine coverings, on which sat the souls of the masters of households and the landed magnates'.<sup>7</sup>

In the Pahlavi treatise *Xusraw ud Rēdag*, the page to whom the king (obviously Xusraw II) set a series of questions, in order to test his aristocratic taste, has the name (or title?) *wāspuhr* 'principal'.<sup>8</sup> In its Arabic rendering he is mentioned as belonging to a great *dehqān* family (*min ru'asā' al-dahāqīn*).<sup>9</sup>

According to Mas'ūdī,<sup>10</sup> the rank of *dehqān* in the Sawād region in the Sasanian period was also inferior to that of the *šahrīgān* (Arabicized form *šahrīj*) 'Chief of the small cantons' (*ra'īs al-kūra*). The name author counted the *šahrīgs* (Ar. *šahārija*) and the *dehqāns* among the noble families (*buyūt al-mušarrafa*).<sup>11</sup>

Ya'qūbī mentioned *dehqāns* along with princes (*abnā' al-mulūk*) as those belonging to the noble class (*man lahu šaraf*) and to the families of upper rank (*al-bayt al-rafi'*).<sup>12</sup>

In a Syriac text written in the first half of the 9th century A.D., *dehqāns* also occur alongside 'noblemen', both groups considered as 'people who were chief among the believers of Adiabene'.<sup>13</sup>

The origin of the *dehqān* class is usually attributed in both Zoroastrian books of the 9th century and in Islamic sources to Wēkart/d (Waygird), brother of Hōšang, the legendary Iranian king.<sup>14</sup>

ān ōwōn wehīh ud xwarrah did pad <wi>zīdagīh az bun-gumēzišnīh tā abar madan ī nōg.nōg āhōgōmandīh ī az dēwān

<sup>7</sup> Gignoux translates 'villageois' and Vahman 'farmers'.

<sup>8</sup> *Pahl. Texts*, p. 27, §1.

<sup>9</sup> Ṭa'ālībī, p. 705.

<sup>10</sup> *Murūj*, I, section 662.

<sup>11</sup> Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> Ya'qūbī, I, p. 203. See Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> Wallis Budge, 1893, p. 256.

<sup>14</sup> *Dēnkard*, p. 438. 7-12, Book V, ch. 4.2; Molé, *Légende*, p. 112-13.

*andar franzandān ī Frawāg ō Hōšang ud Waygird, čiyōn Hōšang pad abartar-xwarrih gēhān xwadāy ud Waygird pad dehgānīh (dhywk'nyh) gēhān warzīdār ud parwardār būd, u-šan paywandān ud āwādagān waxšēnīd ān ī dehbedān tōhmag andar ān ī dehgānān zahag*

'Then, from the original "Mingling" until the arrival of renewed pollutions coming from the demons, the same goodness and the same glory (were assigned) from among the offspring of Frawāg, by preference to Hōšang and Waygird, so that Hōšang became sovereign of the world, thanks to his glory, and Waygird became cultivator and nourisher of the world, because of his being *dehgān*. Their offspring and descendants increased the race of the sovereigns among their progeny'.

Again in the following passage, describing the appearance of the divine revelation at different times to different people:<sup>15</sup>

*ud pad any hangām mad ō Waygird ud Hōšang ī Pēšdād abar winnārdan ī andar gēhān dād ī dehgānīh <ud> gēhān-warzīdārīh ud dehbedīh <ud> gēhān-pānagīh*

'At another time (the words of Ohrmazd) came to Waygird and Hōšang, the Pēšdādian, for establishing in the world the law of *dehgān*hood and cultivation of the world, and of sovereignty and protection of the world'.

Further:<sup>16</sup>

*bun-nihišn ī dād <ud> ēwēnag ān ī dehgānīh (dhywk'nyh) pad warzīdārīh <ud> parwardagīh <ī> gēhān abar Waygird <ī> Pēšdād <ud> ān ī dehbedīh pad pānagīh ud rāyēnīdārīh <ī> dām abar Hōšang ī Pēšdād*

'The original establishment of the laws and customs of *dehgān*hood, for the cultivation and nourishment of the world, (is attributed) to Waygird, the Pēšdādian, and those of sovereignty, for the protection and organization of the creation, to Hōšang, the Pēšdādian'.

<sup>15</sup>. *Dēnkard*, p. 594. 14-17, Book VII, ch. 1, 16; Molé, *Légende*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>16</sup>. *Dēnkard*, p. 688.17, Book VIII, ch. 13, 5.

A similar statement is found among the Islamic sources:<sup>17</sup>

'The sovereignty (*dahūfadiyya*) was founded by Hōšang and *dehgān*hood (*dahqana*) by his brother Waygird'.

In some sources, however, the innovation is credited to Manūčīhr:<sup>18</sup>

'Manūčīhr was the first who established the estate of *dehqān* (or: *dehgān*hood); *dahqana*. He appointed a *dehqān* in each village and made its people his servitors and his servants, clothed them with humility and ordered them to obey him'.

This same statement is recorded by Ta'alībī:<sup>19</sup>

'Manūčīhr was the first who appointed a *dehqān* in each village, made its people his servants, clothed them with humility and compelled them to keep cows',

Ibn al-Balxī:<sup>20</sup>

'Manūčīhr innovated the estate of *dehqāns* (or: *dehgān*hood; *dehqānī*)...',

and Bal'amī:<sup>21</sup>

'Manūčīhr said to the *dehqāns*, "I expect from you the prosperity of each village," and he ordered the peasants thus, "Obey the commands of the *dehqāns*, so that the world may become prosperous!"'

Nevertheless, since the term *dehqān* is not attested in early Sasanian documents, but is sometimes mentioned in the Pahlavi books (of the 9th century), and frequently occurs in descriptions of the Sasanian administration in early Islamic sources, it is permissible to suppose that *dehqāns* emerged as a social class as a result of land reforms in the time of Xusraw I (531-79). According to Ta'alībī this king admonished the future king thus:<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup>. Bīrūnī, *Ātār*, p. 220; trl. Sachau, p. 206.

<sup>18</sup>. Tabarī, I, p. 434.

<sup>19</sup>. Ta'alībī, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup>. Ibn al-Balxī, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup>. Bal'amī, p. 345.

<sup>22</sup>. Ta'alībī, p. 6.

'Take care of the estate of *dehqān* just as you take care of kingship, because they were like brothers, and our first ancestor Hōšang was *dehqān* as well as king'.

According to some sources Kawād (488-531) married a daughter of a *dehqān*, who considered himself a descendant of Frēdōn. The fruit of this marriage was Khosraw I,<sup>23</sup> although in some sources the father of the girl is said to be a knight (*aswār*)<sup>24</sup> or an 'army commander' (*spāhbed*).<sup>25</sup> According to the *Šāhnāma*, Bahram V (421-39) also married the daughters of a *dehqān*, named Burzēn.<sup>26</sup>

In the late Sasanian period *dehqāns* and courtiers (*wāspuhragān*; Ar. *ahl al-buyūtāt*) used to have audience with the king on the second day of the Nawrōz and \*Xurram-rōz festivals: the latter, celebrated on the first day of the tenth month Day, was their special feast day,<sup>27</sup> on which the king ate and drank with the *dehqāns* and cultivators.<sup>28</sup>

Management of local affairs was the hereditary responsibility of the *dehqāns*, and the peasants were obliged to obey them,<sup>29</sup> but their estates must have been smaller than those of noble landowners. They probably represented the government among the peasants, and their main duty was to collect taxes.<sup>30</sup>

A story related in the *Šāhnāma*<sup>31</sup> is evidence for the importance of the financial role of *dehqāns* in Sasanian times. Anūšīrawān needed money for his campaign against the Romans, so he was advised by Bozorgmehr (Wuzurgmihr) to borrow money from

<sup>23</sup>. *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 38, v. 148 ff; p. 40, v. 181. *Mujmal*, p. 36, 73 (where the girl is said to be from Iṣfahān or Ahvāz); Dīnawarī, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup>. Tabarī, I, 83. 7; Ibn Miskawayh, I, 91.

<sup>25</sup>. Ibn al-Balxī, p. 85.

<sup>26</sup>. *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 341 f.

<sup>27</sup>. See Bīrūnī, *Qānūn*, I, p. 264; Gardīzī, pp. 239. 254; Abū Maṣṣūr, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup>. Bīrūnī, *Aṭār*, pp. 218, 225.

<sup>29</sup>. Tabarī, I, p. 434; Bal'amī, p. 345; Ibn al-Balxī, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup>. Christensen, *L'Iran*, pp. 112-13.

<sup>31</sup>. *Šāhnāma*, VIII, p. 296, v. 4153 ff.

merchants and *dehqāns*.

*Dehqāns* were divided into five sub-groups according to their social status, each distinguished by dress.<sup>32</sup>

### *Dehqāns in the Islamic period*

The Arabs started their aggression against Sasanian territory in the days of the Caliph Abū Bakr (11-113/632-34) with sporadic attacks on the lands of the *dehqāns* of the Sawād, the cultivated areas of southern Iraq.<sup>33</sup> After the defeat of the Persian army in the time of 'Umar (13-23/634-44) and the gradual disappearance of the nobles who administered the country, the local gentry, i.e. the *dehqāns*, assumed a more important political and social role in their own districts, towns and villages. Some were able to protect their settlements from the conquering armies by surrendering and agreeing to pay the poll-tax (*jizya*). For example, the *dehqān* of Zawābī in Iraq made a treaty with the Arab commander, 'Urwa b. Zayd, in which he agreed to pay a tax of four dirhams for each inhabitant of his district.<sup>34</sup> Bistām, *dehqān* of Burs, also in Iraq, agreed with Zahra to construct a bridge for his army.<sup>35</sup> When the Arab forces arrived at Mahrūd near Baghdad, the local *dehqān* agreed to pay a sum of money to Hāšim b. 'Utba in order to deter him from killing any of the inhabitants of the district.<sup>36</sup> Šīrzād, the *dehqān* of Sābāt, a village near Madā'in (Ctesiphon), was able to save 100,000 peasants who had been besieged by the Arab army.<sup>37</sup>

There are similar reports for other parts of the Sasanian empire. For example, Rabī' b. Zayd was dispatched by 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Amir in the year 30/650-51 to Sīstān. When he reached a

<sup>32</sup>. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, I, section 662.

<sup>33</sup>. Dīnawarī, p. 116-18.

<sup>34</sup>. Balāḍurī, p. 307.

<sup>35</sup>. Tabarī, I, p. 2421; Balāḍurī, p. 318.

<sup>36</sup>. Balāḍurī, p. 324; Tabarī, I, p. 2461.

<sup>37</sup>. Tabarī, I, p. 2426.

fortified village called Zāliq, he was able to conquer its *dehqān*, who managed to survive by paying an amount of money.<sup>38</sup> The *dehqān* of Herāt made a treaty with 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Amir, paying him fifty sacks of dirhams.<sup>39</sup> When Qutaiba b. Muslim (d. 96/715) was appointed by Ḥajjāj as the governor of Khurāsān in 85/704, the *dehqāns* of Balkh went out to meet him in Ṭāliqān and accompanied him in crossing the river.<sup>40</sup>

*Dehqāns* who refused to collaborate with the Arabs, or who preferred resistance, either fled or lost their lives. For example Šahryār, one of the *dehqāns* of Ctesiphon, fought against the Arab army and was finally killed.<sup>41</sup> The *dehqān* of Daskara near Baghdad was accused of treachery and executed at the order of Hāšim b. 'Utba.<sup>42</sup> When 'Utba b. Ġazwān, the Arab commander, arrived in Mesene (Dašt-e Mīšān) and realized that the inhabitants had the intention of resisting, he fought with them and killed their *dehqāns*.<sup>43</sup> Later on, when the *dehqān* of the region apostatized, he was put to death by Muḡayra b. Šu'ba, the governor of Bašra.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the year 15 and the beginning of the year 16/637, when 'Utba b. Ġazwān attacked Sūq al-Ahwāz, its *dehqān* first prepared to fight against him, but then made a peace treaty, accepting to pay tribute. Subsequently he infringed the treaty and Abū Mūsā, the governor of Bašra, attacked the Sūq al-Ahwāz and Nahr Tīrī districts in 17/638.<sup>45</sup> The same governor also attacked Šūš (Susa), where the inhabitants fought against him. Finally its *dehqān* proposed a peace treaty on the condition that Abū Mūsā would give quarter to a hundred of his people. Abū Mūsā accepted this,

<sup>38</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 484.

<sup>39</sup> Gardīzī, p. 102.

<sup>40</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 516.

<sup>41</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 2421-23.

<sup>42</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 324.

<sup>43</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 420.

<sup>44</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 422.

<sup>45</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 464.

but killed the *dehqān* himself.<sup>46</sup> When Mūsā b. Xāzim Salamī arrived at the fortified city of Tirmīḍ he received its *dehqān*, but not having come to an agreement, the latter fled to Turkistan.<sup>47</sup>

The fact that the last Sasanian king, Yazdgird III (632-51), sought support from the *dehqāns* is evidence of the rising power of this class at the end of the Sasanian empire. Thus after his defeat at Nahāwand he went to Isfahan, where its respected *dehqān*, called Maṭyār (\*Mihryār), first promised to help him, but did not abide by his word. The king then went to Kirmān, seeking the help of its *dehqān*, but without avail. Finally he reached Marw, hoping to have the assistance of its *dehqān*, called Māhōya, but he was killed there.<sup>48</sup>

In the early Islamic period, as in late Sasanian times, the *dehqāns* had the task of collecting taxes. They enjoyed a good reputation in this matter. When 'Ubayd-Allāh b. Ziyād, the governor of 'Irāq (d. 28/648), was reproached for employing the *dehqāns* for gathering taxes he defended his actions thus: 'because they are better informed as regards collecting taxes (*abšar bi 'l-jibāya*) and more honest (*'awfā bi 'l-'amāna*) than the Arabs. It is also easier to require them to pay the taxes they have received than the Arabs'.<sup>49</sup>

From the 9th-century Syriac author Thomas of Margā we learn that the *dehqāns* paid tribute to the Šahrīgān, their superiors.<sup>50</sup> They were also responsible for the cultivation of the land, the maintenance of bridges and roads, and for providing hospitality to certain travellers.<sup>51</sup> The lands of *dehqāns* in the region of Sawād, where the population had accepted Islam, were left to them and they were exempt from the poll-tax.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 466; cf. also Dīnawarī, p. 140.

<sup>47</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 514.

<sup>48</sup> Ṭabarī, I, pp. 2875-77.

<sup>49</sup> Ṭabarī, II, pp. 457-58 (year 65 A.H.).

<sup>50</sup> Wallis Budge, p. 257.

<sup>51</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 2470.

<sup>52</sup> Balāḍurī, p. 325.

There were, however, *dehqāns* who adhered to their own faith. They had to pay the poll-tax. Nevertheless, there exist here and there some reports in the Islamic sources suggesting that life was not always easy for them. For instance Zādān, the *dehqān* of Sālīhīn, who was *ḍimmī*, complained to 'Umar, the caliph, against an agent of Sa'd b. Malik, who had caused him harm.<sup>53</sup>

Even those *dehqāns* who were converted to Islam were not always free from religious fanaticism, Arab racism or especially political conflicts. The case of Zādān-Farrox is a typical example. Ṭabarī<sup>54</sup> quotes a letter of complaint from Qarāza b. Ka'b al-'Anṣārī, written in 38/658-9 and addressed to the caliph 'Alī. It runs as follows: 'I inform the Commander of the Faithful that a group of horsemen on their way from Baṣra to Niffar encountered one of the *dehqāns* of the lower Euphrates called Zādān-Farrox, who had already been converted to Islam. They said to him, "Are you Muslim or infidel?" He answered, "I am Muslim." Then they said to him, "What do you say about 'Alī?" He replied, "I speak well of him, he is the Commander of the Faithful and the lord of mankind." They said to him, "O enemy of God, you have renounced the faith." Then a band of them attacked him and cut him to pieces..." This *dehqān* was obviously the victim of the conflict between 'Alī and his rivals.

In the days of Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) the river Tigris overflowed its banks. Ḥajjāj abstained from constructing a dam so that the overflowing water could damage the lands of the *dehqāns*, because he accused them of having assisted Aš'at, who revolted against him.<sup>55</sup>

It may be inferred from various reports that in early Islamic times some *dehqāns* functioned almost as local rulers, especially in eastern Persia, and that any man of wealth or social prestige might thus be called *dehqān*. Sometimes the same person was

<sup>53</sup>. 'Amirī, p. 243.

<sup>54</sup>. Ṭabarī, I, p. 3423.

<sup>55</sup>. Balāḍurī, p. 359, sec. 743; cf. also Jāhīz, *al-Bayān*, III, p. 36; Jāhšiyārī, p. 39.

called *dehqān* in one source and *marzbān* 'governor' in another. For example, in one report Ṭabarī referred to men with the title *marzbān* of Kirmān and Marw and in another called the same men *dehqān*.<sup>56</sup> Balāḍurī mentioned the revolt of the *dehqān* of Šūš, whereas Dīnawarī called the same person *marzbān*.<sup>57</sup>

Dēwāštič (Arabicized forms Dīwāštič, Dīwāstī: 87?-104/706?-22),<sup>58</sup> the last ruler of Panjikand, Sogd and Samarqand, had the title of 'lord' or 'king' (*šwδyk MLK' sm'rknδc MR'Y*,<sup>59</sup> *xwβ*,<sup>60</sup> *xwt'w*<sup>61</sup>) in the Sogdian documents excavated at Mount Mugh, but was designated *dehqān* by Ṭabarī.<sup>62</sup> His name and title *dehqān* seem to have continued in use among his descendants for some time, since the father of a certain religious traditionist (*muḥaddiṭ*) named Xalaf (d. 300/912) was called Dīwāštač, the *dehqān* of Ruxtīn.<sup>63</sup>

In a report recorded in the *Tārīx-e Sīstān*<sup>64</sup> a certain Abarwēz son of Rustam once has the title of *šāh* 'king, lord' of Sīstān, but another time is mentioned with the title *dehqān*.

A number of *dehqāns* of Transoxania are mentioned in the *Hudūd al-'ālam*<sup>65</sup> as more or less influential and prestigious personalities.

In Persian poetry before the 12th century A.D. the title *dehqān* meant 'ruler, amir, lord,' especially in eastern Persia.<sup>66</sup> Sūzanī praised some local rulers as *dehqān* in his poems,<sup>67</sup> among

<sup>56</sup>. Ṭabarī, I, pp. 2872-77; cf. Dīnawarī, p. 148, 'āmīl 'governor' of Marw; Gardīzī, p. 102, *sālār* and *dehqān* of Marw.

<sup>57</sup>. Balāḍurī, p. 466; Dīnawarī, p. 140.

<sup>58</sup>. See B. Marshak, 'Dēwāštič,' *Enc. Iranica*, VII, pp. 334 f.

<sup>59</sup>. Livšits, Mugh II, p. 136; Bogoljubov-Smirnova, Mugh III, p. 67.

<sup>60</sup>. Mugh III, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup>. Mugh III, p. 49.

<sup>62</sup>. Ṭabarī, II, p. 1446.

<sup>63</sup>. Nasafī, *al-Qand*, p. 25, no. 9. See Tafazzolī, 1995, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup>. Ed. Bahār, p. 81.

<sup>65</sup>. Ed. Soioodeh, pp. 82, 83, 100, 114.

<sup>66</sup>. Mas'ūd Sa'd, *Dīvān*, p. 374; Nāšir Xusraw, *Dīvān*, p. 107.

<sup>67</sup>. Sūzanī, *Dīvān*, pp. 200, 224, 436, 485.

them one with the title '*ayn al-dahāqīn* 'the eye of the *dehqān*'.<sup>68</sup> *Dehqāns* were sometimes mentioned alongside 'princes' (*malik-zādagān*) and 'grantees' (*mehtarān*), sometimes together with 'local rulers' (*mulūk*) and 'learned men' (*aḥbār*)<sup>69</sup>, sometimes with 'local rulers' (*mulūk*) and 'governors' (*marzbānān*),<sup>70</sup> or with 'knights' (*aswārān*) and 'army commanders' (*jund-sallārān*).<sup>71</sup>

It is clear that the term *dehqān*, which was used to designate a lower group of the noble class of Sasanian society, was gradually developed in the sense of 'Persian noble' after the Arab conquest and the disintegration of the Sasanian social class system.

The Arabs often consulted *dehqāns* on political and social affairs. For example, when 'Ubayd-Allāh al-Muxāriq<sup>72</sup> was sent on a mission as the agent of Ḥajjāj in Fallūjatayn, the first question he asked his people was whether there was any *dehqān* with whom he could have consultation. He was referred to Jamīl al-Baṣbuhri. The Arab agent summoned him and consulted with him on how to administer the region. The *dehqān* gave him some pieces of advice, quoted by Jāhšiyārī.<sup>73</sup>

In some instances the *dehqāns* were able to intervene on behalf of one of the parties to a conflict.<sup>74</sup> The caliph 'Uṣmān (23-35/644-56), for example, appointed 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Amir as governor of Baṣra, and Sa'id b. 'Aṣ as governor of Kūfa, writing to both that whichever of them first reached Khorasan, he would be *amīr* of the region. Both set out for Khorasan. One of the *dehqāns* of the region came to 'Abd-Allāh and proposed to

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 311, 326.

<sup>69</sup> Tabarī, II, p. 1237.

<sup>70</sup> Muḥmal, p. 328.

<sup>71</sup> Tabarī, I, p. 3249; Balāḍurī, p. 505, where instead of *jund-sallārān*, \**deh-sallārān* 'village chiefs' are mentioned.

<sup>72</sup> Recorded as 'Ubayd b. Abī Muxāriq by Mas'ūdī.

<sup>73</sup> Jāhšiyārī, p. 40; Moḥammadī, p. 13, note.

<sup>74</sup> Tabarī, II, 1420.

help him, provided that the Arab commander would exempt him and his family from paying taxes for ever. With the assistance of this *dehqān* 'Abd-Allāh reached Qumis before his rival and was able to conquer Nišāpūr in 30/650-51.<sup>75</sup> The *dehqāns* of the regions of Fariyāb, Marw, etc. took the part of Ḥārīt b. Surayj against 'Aṣim b. 'Abd-Allāh in 116/734.<sup>76</sup>

In the first half of the 9th century A.D. Sahl b. Sunbat, who first sheltered Bābak Xurramdīn in his castle but later betrayed him to Afšīn, was a *dehqān*.<sup>77</sup> Another *dehqān*, Ibn Šarvīn Ṭabarī, was appointed to bring Bābak's brother 'Abd-Allāh to Bagdad as a captive; on the way 'Abd-Allāh asked to be treated in the manner of the *dehqāns*, and Ibn Šarvīn gave him wine.<sup>78</sup>

*Dehqāns* enjoyed great respect and prestige at the court of the Samanids (204-819/395-1005). The poet Rūdakī, in an ode (*qaṣīda*) describing a banquet at the court of Naṣr b. Aḥmad (301-31/913-43), mentioned a *dehqān* called Pīr Šālīḥ who sat with the nobles (*hurrān*) facing the ranks of the Amirs and the Grand Vizier, Muḥammad Bal'amī.<sup>79</sup>

In the early Islamic centuries many important political figures of eastern Persia were *dehqāns*. For example, Aḥmad b. Sahl b. Hāšim, the Samanid Amir, was a *dehqān* of Ĵīranj (in Marw) and a descendant of Yazdgird III.<sup>80</sup> Abū Muslim Khorasani (Xurāsānī), prominent leader in the Abbasid cause, is said to have been one of the *dehqāns* of Iṣfahān.<sup>81</sup> Some personalities were descendants of *dehqān* families. The father of Niẓām al-Mulk, the Saljuq grand vizier, for example, is reported to

<sup>75</sup> Ya'qūbī, Beirut ed., II, p. 166-67.

<sup>76</sup> Tabarī, II, p. 1569.

<sup>77</sup> Muḥmal, p. 357.

<sup>78</sup> Tabarī, III, p. 1231.

<sup>79</sup> Tārīx-e Sīstān, p. 319.

<sup>80</sup> Gardīzī, p. 151.

<sup>81</sup> Šūlī, p. 225.

have been a rich *dehqān* of the Baihaq region.<sup>82</sup>

In these early Islamic times many *dehqāns*, as the heirs of Sasanian gentry, led comfortable, even luxurious lives, like their forebears. Jāhīz describes the table etiquette observed by the *dehqāns*, mirroring the aristocratic taste of Sasanian times, as follows:

'The *dehqāns* condemn the habit of gulping down food, hate gnawing a bone to pick it clean, blame those who take away the marrow from the bone; they eat with a spoon,<sup>83</sup> cut the meat with a knife, keep silence while eating, avoid futile words but prefer to murmur (*zamzam*).'<sup>84</sup>

A story recorded by Jāhšiyārī<sup>85</sup> demonstrates well the aristocratic taste of the *dehqāns* in the early Islamic period. It runs as follow:

'Faḏl b. Marwān related that one day when he and Ishāq b. Sūrīn were in Baradān, a village near Baghdad, Faḏl b. Ja'far b. Yaḥyā the Barmakid passed them, being followed by a Zoroastrian man with a long neck. When the latter reached us he asked for some cold water. He was given an earthen pot full of water. The pot did not appeal to him and he complained, saying, "Dehqānhood (*dahqana*) has nearly vanished; where is the silverware?" Ishāq replied, "It is forbidden in Islam." The man said, "Where is then some glassware?" ... This man was Faḏl b. Sahl, the secretary (*kātib*) of Faḏl b. Yaḥyā.'

Balāḏurī, describing in detail the amount of taxes that the people of Sawād were due to pay during the rule of the caliph 'Alī (35-40/656-61), mentioned three strata of people connected with farming: 1) *dehqāns*, who rode a mount and put a gold seal on their fingers, 2) the middle stratum, which consisted of traders, and 3) peasants.

Among the events of the same period Ṭabarī relates that Ja'da

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Funduq, pp. 73, 78.

<sup>83</sup> *barjīn* in the text, probably < \**abarčīn*.

<sup>84</sup> Jāhīz, *al-Buxalā'*, p. 71; transl. Pellat, p. 98.

<sup>85</sup> Jāhšiyārī, pp. 231-32.

b. Hubayra, the Arab commander, was dispatched to Khorasan. I Marw two Persian princesses fell into his hands as captives. He sent them to the Caliph, who offered them Islam so that he could give them in marriage. They asked him to marry them to the two sons of the Caliph, but 'Alī refused their request. Then, at the request of a *dehqān*, 'Alī let him marry them. The *dehqān* held them in respect, provided them with silk carpets and gave them food in gold vessels.<sup>86</sup> In another similar version, recorded by Dīnawarī,<sup>87</sup> there was only one princess, who was given in marriage to one of the great *dehqāns* of 'Irāq (*min 'uzamā' dahāqīn*) called Narsē.

As to the clothing and the appearance of the lady *dehqāns* of Transoxania, Balāḏurī relates thus.<sup>88</sup> 'Sa'id b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, governor of Khorasan under the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (101-5/720-24), was called *xudīna*, meaning 'lady' (Sogdian *xwt(')ynh* [sic],<sup>89</sup> because he used to wear a coloured garment and let his hair flow down like a *dehqāna*... and he had coloured cushions around him.'

In an account concerning the refusal of the people of Sogdiana who were converted to Islam to pay poll-tax (*jizya*) to Ašras, the Muslim governor, in the year 110/728-29, Ṭabarī wrote that the agents of Ašras humiliated the Persian grandees (*'uzamā' al-'aḡam*) and a certain 'Umayra was given power over the *dehqāns*. He tore their clothes violently, put their girdles around their necks and extorted taxes from them.<sup>90</sup> From this account it may be inferred that *dehqāns* wore a girdle, which was regarded as the insignia of the nobility in ancient Iran.<sup>91</sup> Balāḏurī<sup>92</sup> also mentioned on another occasion the clothes and the girdles of

<sup>86</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 3350.

<sup>87</sup> Dīnawarī, pp. 163-64.

<sup>88</sup> Balāḏurī, p. 524. Cf. also Ṭabarī, II, pp. 1417-18.

<sup>89</sup> See I. Gershevitch, *A grammar of Manichean Sogdian*, Oxford, 1954, §133.

<sup>90</sup> Ṭabarī, II, p. 1509.

<sup>91</sup> Moḥammadī, pp. 14-15.

<sup>92</sup> Balāḏurī, p. 502. Cf. Ṭabarī, II, p. 179; Moḥammadī, *loc.cit.*



the noble ('*uṣamā'*) captives of Sogdiana, which were taken away by Sa'īd b. 'Uṭmān and given to his attendants.

*Dehqāns* used to offer presents to the caliphs and local rulers at the Nowrūz and Mihragān festivals, just as their ancestors had done in Sasanian times. According to Qāzī Rašīd (5th/11th cent.)<sup>93</sup> the Nowrūz presents offered to the kings of Persia were 10 million and those of Mihragān were 100 million (*dirhams*). The same amount was offered to the caliphs in the Islamic period. Jāhiz<sup>94</sup> relates that a group of *dehqāns* offered 'Alī, the Caliph, silver bowls (*jāmāt*) containing *xabīṣ* (a dish made of dates with flour and butter) as Nowrūz presents. The caliph distributed them among his attendants. Ṭabarī described in detail the presents offered to Asad b. 'Abd-Allāh Qasrī, governor of Khorasan, at the Mihragān feast at Balkh in 120/738. His account runs as follows:<sup>95</sup>

'The agent of Herat, Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥanafī, accompanied by Xurāsān, the *dehqān* of the region, offered presents valued at one million (*dirhams*), among which were two scale models of the palace, one made of gold and the other of silver, jugs ('*abārīq*') of gold and silver, trays of gold and silver. Both men came near Asad, who was seated on a throne, while the dignitaries of Khorasan were sitting on seats. The two men put down the palace scale models and behind these they placed the jugs, the trays, the brocade (materials) and other things, so that there was no place on the table-cloth (*simāt*). Among the presents offered by the *dehqāns* there was also a gold ball. Then the *dehqān* delivered a speech in which he praised Asad, which pleased him very much. In reply to the *dehqān*'s speech, the governor addressed him thus: "You are the best *dehqān* of Khorasan and your presents are the best..."

<sup>93</sup>. Qāzī Rašīd b. al-Zubayr, *Al-Daxā'ir wa 'l-tuḥaf*, 2nd ed. M. Ḥamīd-Allāh, Kuwait, 1984, p. 5, § 4.

<sup>94</sup>. Bayhaqī, p. 366. See also Moḥammadī, p. 175.

<sup>95</sup>. Ṭabarī, II, pp. 1635-38.

Then Asad distributed the presents among his attendants.'

Hārūn al-Rašīd (170-93/786-809), on his way from Baghdad to Ṭūs, fell ill in a village in Bayhaq and had to stay there four months as the guest of a *dehqān*, who served him with magnificence and offered him precious gifts when he departed.<sup>96</sup>

Islamic sources abound with anecdotes about *dehqāns* illustrating their noble demeanours. For example, it is related that two Arabs from the Banī Asad tribe while travelling arrived at Rāwand, a town between Iṣfahān and Kashan, where they made friends with a *dehqān*, who accompanied them on their journey. Later on one of the Arabs died, and the other one, together with the *dehqān*, used to go to his grave, drinking wine and pouring some on his grave. It was not long before the *dehqān* also passed away. Then the other Arab used to recite poetry over both their graves.<sup>97</sup>

### Cultural significance

Aside from their political and social significance, the *dehqāns* played an important cultural role. Many participated in the courts of caliphs or governors, and after the establishment of the Persian dynasties in the east they served kings, princes and amirs as learned men who were well informed on the history and culture of ancient Iran. Bayhaqī<sup>98</sup> reported that Ziyād b. Abīh (d. 56/675), while still governor of Baṣra, had in his service three *dehqāns*, who told him stories of Sasanian grandeur and pomp, causing him to think Arab rule much inferior. In the *Tārīx-e Sīstān*<sup>99</sup> a number of wise sayings, similar to the Pahlavi *andarz*, are attributed to a certain Zoroastrian *dehqān* named Rustam b. Hurmazd, who reportedly uttered them at the request of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd-Allāh, an Umayyad governor of Sīstān.

<sup>96</sup>. Ibn Funduq, pp. 47-48.

<sup>97</sup>. Yāqūt, *Buldān*, II, p. 740; Abū Tammām, I, p. 362. Cf. Balāḍurī, pp. 398-99.

<sup>98</sup>. Bayhaqī, p. 299.

<sup>99</sup>. *Tārīx-e Sīstān*, p. 106.

We have already referred to pieces of advice given by a *dehqān* named Jamīl b. Bašbuhrī to the agent of Ḥajjāj in Fallūjatayn.<sup>100</sup> The same *dehqān*, described as a prudent (*hāzim*) and leading personality (*muqaddam*), was said to have been referred to for consultation by other *dehqāns*, who had a complaint about the harm caused by Ḥajjāj. The wise *dehqān* gave them advice in the form of a short parable.<sup>101</sup>

Firdowsī often quoted such sayings from the *dehqāns*.<sup>102</sup> In one of his verses he said:<sup>103</sup> 'Now little is left over from the wisdom that the wise credited to *dehqāns*'.

Anecdotes manifesting their skill in expressing witticism and quick repartee are preserved in the Islamic sources. What follows is an example recorded by Tawḥīdī:<sup>104</sup>

'Khosraw II confiscated the land of a *dehqān* and gave it to a certain Naxīrajān (<Naxwīragān) as fief ('*iqṭā'*). Following a complaint of the owner the king asked him, "Since when have you and your ancestors had this land in your possession?" "Since a long time," replied the *dehqān*. The king then said: "It will remain in the hands of Naxīrajān for some time, then it will be returned to you." The man said: "What would have happened if you had entrusted your kingdom for a while to Bahrām (Čōbīn)<sup>105</sup>?" Upon this reply the king returned him his land.'

The 9th-century author Jāḥiẓ<sup>106</sup> also quoted some folkloric sayings of *dehqāns*.

<sup>100</sup> See n. 73 *supra*.

<sup>101</sup> Jāḥiẓiārī, pp. 30-40.

<sup>102</sup> *Šāhnāma*, IX, p. 211, v. 3380.

<sup>103</sup> *Šāhnāma*, IX, p. 17, v. 112.

<sup>104</sup> Tawḥīdī, III, p. 175. Cf. Bayhaqī, p. 459.

<sup>105</sup> Who had usurped Xusraw's throne for a short time at the beginning of his reign.

<sup>106</sup> Jāḥiẓ, *al-Buxalā'*, I, p. 115, II, p. 125.

## Learned men

In both Arabic and Persian sources the names of many learned persons and men of letters, including theologians, are mentioned who were *dehqāns* or descendants of *dehqān* families. Several of them from the Bayhaq regions were mentioned by Ibn Funduq,<sup>107</sup> among whom there was a jurisprudent (*faqīh*) named Abū Dujāna, who had also written a valuable (*naḥs*) book on agriculture, of which Ibn Funduq quotes some passages.<sup>108</sup> Several of such religious traditionists (*muḥaddiṭ*), *dehqāns* or descendants of *dehqāns*, belonging to the Samarqand regions are mentioned by Nasafi<sup>109</sup> and those from Nīšāpūr by al-Ḥākim.<sup>110</sup> Some were patrons of Islamic religious scholars; for example, Ibn Funduq<sup>111</sup> mentioned a wealthy *dehqān* from Sabzawār who in 418/1027 founded a religious school for a Koran commentator named Ibn Ṭayyeb.

## Patrons of Persian culture

The majority of *dehqāns* favoured Persian culture, however, and some were patrons of renowned Persian poets. Rūdakī<sup>112</sup> related that the *dehqāns* gave him money and riding animals. Farroxi in his youth served a *dehqān* in Sīstān and received an annual pension from him. According to one tradition, Firdowsī himself was a *dehqān*.<sup>113</sup> 'Awfī mentioned a certain *dehqān* called 'Alī Šaṭranjī among the poets of the Saljūq period.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Ibn Funduq, pp. 116, 125, 129, 145.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>109</sup> Nasafi, pp. 25, 57, 87, 156, 245, 345-47.

<sup>110</sup> al-Ḥākim, *Tārīx-e Nīšāpūr*, pp. 12, 43, 44, 47, 91, 112.

<sup>111</sup> Ibn Funduq, p. 185.

<sup>112</sup> Rūdakī, *Dīvān*, p. 458.

<sup>113</sup> *Čahār Maqāla*, pp. 58, 75.

<sup>114</sup> 'Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 199-207.

Most of the credit for the preservation of the stories in the national epic, the *Šāhnāma*, pre-Islamic historical and legendary traditions, and the romances of ancient Iran, belongs to the *dehqāns*.

In the introduction of the *Šāhnāma* known as Bāysonğorī, concerning the compilation of the Pahlavi *Xwadāy-nāmag*, the task of the final redaction of this work was credited to a *dehqān*. The passage runs as follow:

'In the days of Yazdgerd (III), son of Šahryār, the collection (of narratives which had been gathered during the reign of Khosraw I) was dispersed in the royal treasury. This king ordered a learned *dehqān*, who was one of the grandees (*akābir*) of Madā'in (Ctesiphon), ... to make a list (*fihrist*) of historical events (*tawārīx*), mentioning them sequentially from the reign of Gayōmart till the end of the reign of Khosraw (II) Parwēz.'<sup>115</sup>

Abū Maṣṣūr Mu'ammārī, who compiled the prose *Šāhnāma-ye Abū Maṣṣūrī* (346/957), now lost, wrote in his preface, which does survive, that in gathering his material he summoned a number of *dehqāns* from various cities of Khorasan, considered to be descendants of the ancient Persian kings.<sup>116</sup>

Bal'amī, too, attributed the information concerning the chronology of the ancient kings of Persia to *dehqāns*, because: 'this kingdom was at first in their hands, and they know whether a king reigned for a short or a long period'.<sup>117</sup>

Firdowsī often cited *dehqāns* as sources, sometimes apparently oral ones, for his narratives.<sup>118</sup> Other poets, too, such as Asadī Ṭūsī,<sup>119</sup> Irānšāh,<sup>120</sup> Niẓāmī,<sup>121</sup> referred to traditions from the

<sup>115</sup> See Šafā, 1333, pp. 60-61.

<sup>116</sup> Qazvīnī, pp. 34-35.

<sup>117</sup> Bal'amī, p. 7-9.

<sup>118</sup> *Šāhnāma*, I, p. 28, v. 1; II, p. 170, v. 15; III, pp. 6-7, vv. 8, 19; IV, p. 320, vv. 19-20; VI, p. 167, v. 25; VIII, p. 146, vv. 1559-60, p. 156, v. 1737.

<sup>119</sup> Asadī, *Garšāsp-nāma*, p. 21, v. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Irānšāh, *Bahman-nāma*, p. 17.

<sup>121</sup> Niẓāmī, *Šarafnāma*, pp. 436-508.

*dehqān* – even for the Arab stories.<sup>122</sup> The term *dehqān* thus also came to be defined as 'historian, one versed in history'.<sup>123</sup> According to Ġazzālī,<sup>124</sup> the Abbasid caliph Ma'mūn (198-218/813-33) summoned the Zoroastrian *dehqāns* and asked them about the amount of money bestowed on those who received robes of honour in Sasanian times. Instead of giving a relevant answer, they uttered some maxims.

The profound attachment of the *dehqāns* to the culture of ancient Iran also lent to the very word *dehqān* the sense of 'Persian, Iranian', especially 'Persian of noble blood', in contrast to Arabs, Turks, and Romans in particular. Firdowsī<sup>125</sup> as well as other Persian poets of the 10th-11th centuries A.D. such as Nāṣir-e Xusraw,<sup>126</sup> Farruxī<sup>127</sup> Abū Ḥanīfa Iskāfī,<sup>128</sup> and 'Unṣurī,<sup>129</sup> used the word in this sense.

Balāqurī<sup>130</sup> relates that: 'Ašras b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Sulamī, governor of Khorasan (d. 111/729), increased the rations of the Arabs in Khorasan and humiliated the *dehqāns*'. According to Ṭabarī,<sup>131</sup> Marwazān, governor of Yemen in the time of Xusraw I, had two sons, one Xurrah-Xusraw, who liked to recite Arabic poetry, and another, unnamed, a knight (*aswār*) who spoke and lived in the manner of the *dehqāns* (*yatadahqana*).

An unnamed Arab poet mentioned Būrān, the Sasanian queen (629-30) with the title *dihqāna* 'lady *dehqān*'.<sup>132</sup>

دهقانۀ یسجد الملوك لها یجنی الیها الخراج فی الجروب

<sup>122</sup> Niẓāmī, *Lailī u Majnūn*.

<sup>123</sup> See *Burhān-e Qāṭi*, II, p. 905, s.v. *dihgān*.

<sup>124</sup> Ġazzālī, *Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*, pp. 137-38.

<sup>125</sup> *Šāhnāma*, I, p. 21, v. 128. IX, p. 307, v. 7, p. 319, vv. 105-6.

<sup>126</sup> *Divān*, pp. 83, 156, 288.

<sup>127</sup> *Divān*, pp. 274, 282, 314.

<sup>128</sup> Apud Bayhaqī, p. 856.

<sup>129</sup> *Divān*, pp. 137, 239.

<sup>130</sup> Balāqurī, p. 526, sec. 1004.

<sup>131</sup> Ṭabarī, I, p. 1040.

<sup>132</sup> Maqdisī, III, p. 172.

'A lady *dehqān* (noble woman) before whom the kings bow in reverence, and taxes are sent to her in leather sacks'.

### *Dehqāns and Zoroastrianism*

With the advent of Islam some *dehqāns* were steadfast in the religion of their forebears and some were artificially converted to Islam, but remained Zoroastrian at heart. Thus the word *dihqān* sometimes meant a Zoroastrian in classical Persian texts, alone or in expressions such as *ātaš-i dihqān*, *qibla-yi dihqān* 'holy fire' and *dīn-i dihqān* 'Zoroastrian religion'.<sup>133</sup>

### *Dehqāns and wine*

As the remaining representatives of the pre-Islamic Persian aristocracy, in whose customs wine was an essential ingredient, *dehqāns* were also known both in classical Arabic literature and classical Persian texts both as the best wine-producers and as connoisseurs. For example:

رَبِّ عَقَارٍ بَادَرِ نَجِيَّةٍ      اصْطَلَذْتُهَا مِنْ بَيْتِ دَهْقَانٍ

'How much *Bāḍaranjī* wine that I hunted out from the *dehqān*'s house'.

خَطَبْنَا مِنَ الدَّهْقَانِ بَعْضَ بَنَاتِهِ      فَزَوَّجْنَا مِنْهُنَّ فِي خِدْرِهِ الْكُبْرَى

'I asked the *dehqān* for the hand of one of his daughters; he gave me in marriage the oldest one in his women's apartment' (i.e. I requested of him a pot of wine and he gave me an old one).

In a beautiful Persian ode Baššār of Marw (4th/10th cent.), describing metaphorically the procedure for making wine,

<sup>133</sup> *Šāhnāma*, IX, p. 97, v. 1483, p. 134, v. 2106; Farruxī, *Dīvān*, p. 294; Nizāmī, *Šarafnāma*, p. 238; Xāqāmī, p. 411; Mu'izzī, *Dīvān*, pp. 604, 612; Qaṭrān, *Dīvān*, p. 254.

writes:<sup>134</sup>

آگه نبودم ایچ که دهقان مرا ز دور      با آن بزرگوار عروسان همی بدید  
اندر میان سنگ نهان کرد خونشان      دهقان و لب رخشم به دندان همی گزید

'I did not notice at all that the *dehqān* was watching me from afar, while I was associating with those noble brides (i.e. bunches of grapes). Having flown into a great rage, he killed them and concealed their blood within the stones'.

Muslim rulers who disobeyed the Islamic order that prohibits drinking wine, procured it from *dehqāns*. Bayhaqī quoted al-Madā'inī, who related thus: 'During the rule of Ziyād (d. 53/673), one of the *dehqāns* was once carrying wine on a donkey. The police stopped him and said to him, "Do you not know that the ruler (*amīr*) has prohibited wine from entering the city?" The man replied, "Yes, but this wine is for the ruler himself."

With the development of the '*iqṭā*' system, from the 11th century, and the decline of the landowning class, the *dehqāns* gradually lost their importance, and the word came to mean simply a farmer.<sup>135</sup> The epigraphic evidence, however, as well as literary works, indicate that feudal *dehqāns* still existed in the 14th-15th centuries in some parts of Central Asia. The total disappearance of this class seems to have occurred in the 16th century. Since then the word *dehqān* has been used only in the sense of 'farmer, peasant'.

<sup>134</sup> Jā'armī, I, p. 470.

<sup>135</sup> Nāṣir-e Xusraw, p. 118; Ibn Funduq, pp. 28, 266.

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